

*Govindlal Shivalal  
Motilal, Bombay*

LABOUR'S  
FIRST YEAR  
Y J E D HALL  
(612)

VICTORIA TERMINUS N<sup>o</sup>. 1

# LABOUR'S FIRST YEAR

BY

J. E. D. HALL



PENGUIN BOOKS

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#### ABBREVIATIONS

*Lab* — Labour  
*C* — Conservative  
*L. Nat* — Liberal National  
*L.* — Liberal  
*Ind* — Independent  
*UU* — Ulster Unionist  
*Comm* — Communist  
*ILP* — Independent Labour Party

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# THE GOVERNMENT, AUGUST, 1945

**PRIME MINISTER—**  
Clement Attlee \*

**ADMIRALTY—**

First Lord—A. V. Alexander \*  
Civil Lord—W. J. Edwards  
Financial Secretary—John Dugdale

**AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES—**

Minister—Tom Williams \*  
Parliamentary Secretary—Earl of Huntingdon

**AIR—**

Secretary of State—Viscount Stansgate \*  
Under Secretary—John Strachey

**CIVIL AVIATION—**

Minister—Lord Winster  
Parliamentary Secretary—Ivor Thomas.

**COLONIES—**

Secretary of State—George Hall \*  
Under Secretary—Arthur Creech Jones

**DOMINION AFFAIRS—**

Secretary of State—Viscount Addison \*  
Under Secretary—John Parker

**DUCHY OF LANCASTER—**

Chancellor—John Burns Hynd

**EDUCATION—**

Minister—Ellen Wilkinson \*  
Parliamentary Secretary—Arthur Jenkins

**FOOD—**

Minister—Sir Ben Smith  
Parliamentary Secretary—Dr Edith Summerskill

**FOREIGN AFFAIRS—**

Secretary of State—Ernest Bevin \*  
Under Secretary—Hector McNeil

## FUEL AND POWER—\*

Minister—Emanuel Shinwell \*

Parliamentary Secretary—William Foster

## HEALTH—

Minister—Aneurin Bevan \*

Parliamentary Secretary—Charles Key

## HOME AFFAIRS—

Secretary of State—Chuter Ede \*

Under Secretary—G A Oliver

## INDIA AND BURMA—

Secretary of State—Lord Pethick Lawrence \*

Under Secretary—Arthur Henderson

## INFORMATION—

Minister—E J Williams

## LABOUR AND NATIONAL SERVICE—

Minister—George Isaacs \*

Parliamentary Secretary—Ness Edwards.

## LAW OFFICERS—

Attorney General—Sir Hartley Shawcross

Lord Advocate—George Reid Thomson

Solicitor-General—Sir Frank Soskice

Solicitor General for Scotland—D P Blades

## LORD CHANCELLOR—

Lord Jowitt \*

## LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

Herbert Morrison \*

## LORD PRIVY SEAL—

Arthur Greenwood \*

## MINISTER OF STATE—

Philip Noel Butler

## NATIONAL INSURANCE—

Minister—James Griffith

Parliamentary Secretary—G S Lindgren

## PENSIONS—

Minister—Wfred Palmer

Parliamentary Secretary—Mrs Jeanie Adamson

## POST OFFICE—

Postmaster-General—Earl of Listowel

Assistant Postmaster-General—W A Burke

## SCOTLAND—

Secretary of State—Joseph Westwood \*

Joint Under-Secretaries—

George Buchanan

Tom Fraser

## SUPPLY AND AIRCRAFT PRODUCTION—

Minister—John Wilmot

Joint Parliamentary Secretaries—

William Leonard

Arthur Woodburn

## TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING—

Minister—Lewis Silkin

Parliamentary Secretary—Fred Marshall

## TRADE BOARD OF—

President—Sir Stafford Cripps \*

Parliamentary Secretary—Ellis Smith

Department of Overseas Trade, Secretary—

Prof H A Marquand

## TREASURY—

Chancellor of the Exchequer—Hugh Dalton \*

Financial Secretary—Glenvil Hall

## WAR—

Secretary of State—J J Lawson \*

Under-Secretary—Lord Nathan

Financial Secretary—F J Bellenger

## WAR TRANSPORT—

Minister—Alfred Barnes

Parliamentary Secretary—George Strauss.

## WORKS—

Minister—George Tomlinson

Parliamentary Secretary—J H Wilson

\* Members of the Cabinet.

## THE BRITISH REVOLUTION

*But this is terrible. They have elected a Labour Government and the country will never stand for that*—Lady in Claridges quoted by Francis Noel Baker

*I claim that we are really a national Party. We are a cross section of the national life and this is something that has never happened before*—Arthur Greenwood

THE General Election of 1945 by contrast with the political turmoil which existed on the Continent and even with previous elections in this country was a reasonably orderly affair. There was some organised heckling at meetings and defacement of posters but nothing out of the way to an experienced politician. The electorate went quietly and thoughtfully to the polls and in general the election campaigns were undemonstrative and undramatic—unless one excepts Mr Churchill's lightning tour which was a great personal if not a political triumph.

Yet on July 26 the country abruptly woke up to the fact that a revolution had taken place. The results showed that the Labour candidates had swept the polls like a tidal wave and brought the Labour Party to Westminster with a majority of 148 over all other Parties and groups combined. In under half a century this young Party had increased its representation in the House from two to 393 seats. 79 divisions voted Labour for the first time in their history and the Conservative Party with years of power behind it had lost 181 seats.

It is not easy to make any sure analysis of the reasons for this sudden overturning of the political situation. Some incline to the view that the Tories rested too complacently and too exclusively on the great personality and magnificent wartime achievement of Winston Churchill and paid too little regard to expounding their Party platform. It is a

legitimate speculation whether the Labour Party would have captured so many votes—and in particular middle class votes—had they marched into battle under the leadership of some outstanding personality like Ernest Bevin or Herbert Morrison, or of some uncompromising Socialist like Sir Stafford Cripps rather than the unassuming, but reassuring Clement Attlee. As it was, they went to work as a team, backed by an excellent organisation and a detailed plan of action to put before the people. The Socialist remedies for the country's ills were well known, but untried. This may have been to their advantage in appealing to a nation weary of war and hungry for change. Without being untrue to their convictions, the Conservatives could not offer any startling departure from their policy of empirical progress and gradual reform.

Some attribute this desire for change in the immediate post war period to impatience to have done with war and all its associations and take this as evidence of the persistence of insularity in the national character. In spite of the rocket and the atomic bomb, there is still a deep rooted confidence in the Channel as a bulwark against invasion. No such confidence is possible among Continental peoples separated from late enemies only by land frontiers, and it is common form to reward war heroes, military and political with high political office and to maintain them there long after their brilliant wartime records have been dwarfed by ineptitude in peace. The contrary tendency in Britain, to cast off uniform and forget war, may well, in this view, have led to the downfall of Mr Churchill and his Party, although his personal popularity remained undiminished.

Finally, there have been post mortems on the conduct of their campaign by the Conservatives. It may have been out of tune with the mood of the people to have spent so much time and energy on pursuing a side issue and endeavouring to show that Professor Harold Laski, from his position as chairman of the national executive of the Labour Party, might try to dictate policy to Labour

Ministers from outside Again Mr Churchill may have overstated the case against his opponents by alleging that their policy was inseparably interwoven with totalitarianism and that they would have to fall back on some form of Gestapo Many voters found this hard to believe and were confident that the very individualism to which he was directing his appeal was in itself a sufficient insurance against so disagreeable a political destiny

Whatever the reason for it to the observer of the Parliamentary scene at Westminster the transformation that had been wrought by the election was near to the incredible When the new Parliament assembled on August 1 to re-elect the Conservative Colonel Clifton Brown as Speaker the familiar faces were islands in a sea of strangers The benches on the Government side were crammed tight and there was a considerable overspill onto the benches below the gangway opposite Old members found themselves from force of habit wandering over to the wrong side Only the Liberals their numbers halved retained their old bench The three members of the I L P also stuck to their old seats—to the annoyance of Mr Churchill Having sat there so long they probably felt they had established squatters rights

Spirits were high in this first assembly Old friends on the Labour side greeted each other effusively and Tories congratulated one another with heartfelt sincerity on their survival Jovial taunts were flung across the Chamber at the diminished Conservative Party which they bore with cheerful martyrdom until the entrance of Mr Churchill gave them their cue As one man they rose in their seats and roared out For he's a jolly good fellow They may have been a small Party but they were in hearty voice The Labour members were silent—with one exception Ellen Wilkinson's sense of history rose superior to her Party feelings

Immediately after this most unparliamentary demonstration precedent was further shattered by a Social st

counter demonstration. As the Opposition resumed their seats little George Griffiths rose to his feet and conducting vigorously with his arms, began to sing 'The Red Flag' Raggedly at first, but with growing volume, his colleagues joined in. Most stood but the front bench was indecisive. Some Ministers, momentarily transported to a Labour Party Conference, rose promptly and then, recollecting themselves sat down again.

After this jubilant, but excusable lapse from dignity, Parliament concentrated on more solemn matters. The State opening of the new Parliament on August 15 coincided with the surrender of Japan. The House met in the morning in St. Stephen's Hall—it was 111 years to the day since the Commons last sat there—and were summoned to the House of Lords by the Gentleman Usher of the Black Rod to hear the Speech from the Throne. In the afternoon they reassembled in their own Chamber where the Prime Minister made the announcement of the surrender. Afterwards they attended a service of thanksgiving at St. Margaret's Church, returned again to the House and voted an Address of congratulation to the King on the achievement of final victory and the restoration of peace.

So on the very day when the second world war ended Britain began the Socialist experiment. The Labour Government started with a clean slate. They had the majority to stay the statutory distance and to carry through their programme without fear or—if they so pleased—favour to any other Party. The difficulties they had to face were formidable but they could not be blamed for these. On the other scale was the opportunity and nearly twelve million voters would blame them very severely if they failed to grasp it.

## CHAPTER TWO

# FACING THE FUTURE ABROAD

*This Parliament has come here to make an end of war. We believe that leadership by Britain may be a factor of immense importance in time to come. It has been a people's war and we are going to make it a people's peace. The simple folk in every nation now believe that the vital interests of every nation are not individual but common interests. They believe that the prosperity of one nation involves the prosperity of others. They believe that war is futile, wasteful and wicked. They believe that it can be ended by this generation if it wants to. The Government believes these things too and it is in that spirit which we shall work.—Philip Noel Baker*

AFTER so many ceremonial and procedural preliminaries it was with some relief that the House finally got down to business on August 16. There was however one small item—a sort of Grace before meat—which had to be disposed of and this was the first reading of the Outlawries Bill for the effectual preventing of Clandestine Outlawries.<sup>1</sup> According to Sir Alan Herbert this was a most extraordinary proceeding. It is a Bill not recommended or introduced by any member. It is not printed and it is quite impossible to find a copy of it in the library." But as he explained it was a historic reminder of the right of the Commons to discuss whatever they pleased before Government business.

This gesture of independence duly made the Commons proceeded to the consideration of the King's Speech.\* Under ordinary circumstances this debate, dealing as it does with the broad policy and legislative programme of the Government for the Parliamentary year is both critical and diverse and lasts for some ten or twelve days. But these were no ordinary circumstances. The sudden outbreak of peace,<sup>2</sup> coupled with the equally sudden reverse

\* See Appendix I page 201

of Party fortunes, threw the proceedings somewhat out of joint. After many years of National Government it was not easy to drop into the habits of Party strife. Members of the Coalition Government, who had worked for many years in comparative harmony, now found themselves opponents, facing each other across the floor of the House.

But the harness in which they had worked together could not, to the British way of thinking, be swept unceremoniously out of sight, and it was Mr Attlee, the new Prime Minister, who, in a tribute to Mr Churchill, tidied it decorously away. "In the darkest and most dangerous hour of our history," he said, "this nation found in Mr Churchill the man who expressed supremely the courage and determination never to yield which animated all the men and women of this country. He radiated a stream of energy throughout the machinery of Government, indeed, throughout the life of the nation. His place in history is secure."

There were other factors, too, which made this four day debate in Mr Churchill's words "a comparatively innocuous occasion." The Opposition had yet to formulate its policy, while the Government, though sure of the ends, was not yet master of the means. Moreover, half of the speeches from the backbenches were from maiden speakers. A kindly tradition has it that such speeches should be not only non-controversial in themselves but immune from attack. The latter of these beneficent conditions was observed but the ardour of some of the "new boys" tended to override the former. Again the shortness of the debate prevented members from bringing up the usual wide range of topics. Hardy annuals like the decimal system found no champion nor was there opportunity for deplored such minor scandals as the export of gin to the natives of Africa.

The debate takes place on the motion that an address of thanks be presented to His Majesty for his Gracious Speech—in other words it is a motion to approve the Government's programme—and it is traditionally moved

and seconded by backbenchers representing some aspect of the nation. The Prime Minister's choice had fallen upon Major Freeman, representing the Services, and Mr Wiley, representing the home front, both, of course, Labour members and both maiden speakers. The greater part of their speeches was correctly and traditionally devoted to praise of their constituencies.

Overshadowing the debate, as it did the victory, was the atomic bomb. Relief at the end of the war was undoubtedly clouded by doubts of a future that held so sombre a power and Mr Churchill, following the mover and seconder of the address as Leader of the Opposition, dealt early with the bomb. Some people, he noted, asserted that the bomb should never have been used at all. He could not associate himself with such ideas. 'Six years of total war have convinced most people that had the Germans and the Japanese discovered this new weapon, they would have used it upon us with the utmost alacrity,' he said. 'I am surprised that very worthy people should adopt the position that, rather than throw this bomb, we should have sacrificed a million American and a quarter of a million British lives in the desperate battles and massacres of an invasion of Japan. Future generations will judge these dire decisions and I believe that if they find themselves dwelling in a happier world from which war has been banished, and where freedom reigns, they will not condemn those who struggled for their benefit amid the horrors and miseries of this gruesome and ferocious epoch. The bomb brought peace but men alone can keep that peace, and henceforward they will keep it under penalties which threaten the survival, not only of civilisation, but of humanity itself. Our pilgrimage has brought us to a sublime moment in the history of the world. From the least to the greatest, all must strive to be worthy of these supreme opportunities. There is not an hour to be wasted, not a day to be lost.'

Mr Attlee was reserved on this question. He agreed

that the prevention of war was, in the light of these new forces of destruction, vital to the survival of civilisation, but he had no statement to make at that time on plans for controlling them. That they had to be controlled in the interests of all people in the world and not exploited for the interest of one was obvious.

Bickbenchers tended to assess humanity's new problem in the light of their political convictions. Mrs Middleton, who had captured Lady Astor's old seat for Labour, doubted whether peacekeeping machinery would suffice for peacekeeping if men, women and children were fed, clothed and housed under conditions that did not conform to civilized standards. 'We shall not bring peace to humanity by the threat of atomic bombs, for while such conditions exist, why should men and women fear death when the circumstances under which they have lived are such that they hardly know what it is to be alive?' To Clem Davies, the leader of the Parliamentary Liberal Party, the bomb ushered in a new era in which the idealist who was sneered at in the past was today's realist and the poet who visualized "the Parliament of man, the federation of the world" was near the truth. To the Conservative mind a more practical view readily presented itself, and Captain Gammans was concerned for the new vulnerability of this crowded island, the most vulnerable political unit in the world. From now on our own security should be the basis of our foreign policy. 'We are not interested whether the Government of another country is Left Wing, Centre Wing, Right Wing, red, pink or yellow. What matters to us is whether the Government of that country is favourable to the security of this country.' Of the Independents Vernon Birtlett thought the Security Council could not possibly exist if two permanent members of it possessed some secret denied to the others and W. J. Brown felt himself in the presence of something which might make the whole of our internal and international politics out of date a power great enough to enable mankind to socialize plenty, instead of socializing poverty.

But if the atomic bomb overshadowed the future the present held sufficient doubts and dangers to engross the mind of Parliament. The relations between the victorious powers and the grave economic, political and social state of Europe—all the vast problems that arose in the aftermath of war—had to be faced. In the foreign field the debate soon revealed that the national spirit prevailed. Leading speakers from both Government and Opposition benches showed little divergence in policy though varying emphasis was laid on aspects of policy.

Mr Churchill made his contribution with typical mastery of phrase. A headless Germany had fallen into the conqueror's hands he said but we could not have the German masses lying down on our hands. Enormous numbers of Germans who had dwelt in new Poland were utterly unaccounted for. Where were they gone and what had been their fate? Sparse and guarded accounts of what had happened had filtered through but it was not impossible that tragedy on a prodigious scale was unfolding itself behind the iron curtain which divided Europe in twain.

Almost everywhere in the mountainous turbulent ill organised and warlike regions of the Balkans Communists had obtained or were obtaining dictatorial powers. In those countries torn and convulsed by war there might be for some months to come the need for authoritarian Government. The alternative would be anarchy. Nevertheless at that time police Governments ruled over a great number of countries. Now was the time to speak out. It was odious that governments should seek to maintain their rule otherwise than by free unfettered elections by the mass of the people. On the other hand it would be a mistake to try to interfere with the affairs of other countries.

It is impossible to understand the domestic policies of other countries he said and added with a rueful glance over the top of his spectacles at the Labour majority opposite. It is hard enough to understand the domestic policies of one's own.

Mr Churchill's speech was, in effect, the last of his magnificent series of accountings to Parliament as a great war leader. When the Prime Minister followed him, a page of history turned. The echoes of war which reverberated in Mr Churchill's speech were unheard in Mr Attlee's. For pugnacity, there was persistence, for eloquence, precision. He conceded that there were many governments in Europe which rested on no sure foundation of popular election, but it was really optimistic to expect political life in those countries to settle down easily, quickly and smoothly. In many of them political life had never been easy or smooth in the best times of peace.

But it was from the new Foreign Secretary, Ernest Bevin, that the detailed picture came. This massive figure, shrewd, forthright and of abundant humanity, saw the difficulties in Europe as twofold. One was that all people in these countries had been taught to disobey and to oppose the authority of the occupying forces and it was now extremely difficult to bring back a general acceptance of law and order as a natural thing. Secondly, there had been constant appeals to the people to produce as little as they could in order to hamper the work of the enemy and now suddenly they were asked once again to acquire the habits of work and energy and discipline. The transition from one state of affairs to another would need tolerance, patience and determination.

Yet another problem was presented by thousands of displaced persons in Europe who, since the liberation, had become almost nomadic, wandering about thieving for their food, committing murder and rape, and indulging in all kinds of anti social practices. This terrifying scene was the happy hunting ground for men seeking to obtain political power and there was great difficulty in creating settled and orderly governments with obedience to the laws and acceptance of its normal rules together with the habits of useful labour. In the beginning it might be impossible to secure completely that governments were elected in

accordance with the desires of free peoples. But even in the beginning, the substitution of one form of totalitarianism for another should be prevented.

In a world stunned and only just beginning to awaken from the stupefying effects of war the main duty of the Great Powers would be to act as guardians of the peace, not dominating others, but accepting it as their obligation and duty to create conditions under which other countries of whatever size could once more contribute not only to their own well-being but add to the common pool for the good of humanity.

"Between the wars we have been accustomed to the vicious circle whereby trade could not flourish because of the lack of security, while security was endangered through lack of trade. Now, at last, we have found our way to what is, for the time being, security. Therefore this is the moment to break that vicious circle. We must strive to fight successfully against social injustice and against hardship and want, so that the security we have won militarily will lead to greater security and greater security to still greater economic expansion. It is with this in mind that the Government regard the economic reconstruction of the world as the primary object of their foreign policy".

On broad issues it was thus apparent that there was harmony between the two front benches and that in practice continuity in foreign policy was assured, with the stress falling on the one side on democratic freedom and on the other on economic reconstruction as the respective highways to security. Even on separate issues this harmony prevailed though a little ruffled by cross-currents. Labour members were not happy about continuity of policy in Greece and Michael Foot (Lab) decried the Tories who had applauded Mr Churchill's comments on police governments. He thought they had left the mass journey to Damascus rather late. When General Franco raised his rebellion against the ballot box, where were they? But on both Spain and Greece, on the ill guided policy of the

Poles in seeking an undue extension of their Western boundaries and other topics the leaders of both sides echoed one another

There was only one rift and this was really only a domestic matter with diplomatic implications—the very sore subject of Professor Laski. Mr Churchill was unable to resist resuscitating this spectre of the hustings. *Mister Laski*, he said, had declared that if the French voted Socialist, Great Britain would renew the 1940 offer that Britain and France should become one nation with a common citizenship. Was this endorsed by the Government? Brigadier Fitzroy Maclean (C) also remarked that Professor Laski had hinged our relations and friendship with the United States on the attitude of American financiers towards the Socialist experiment in this country. That was surely a dangerous doctrine. It meant that our foreign policy was based on the shifting sands of political sentimentality and not on reality. Mr Churchill's "Laski-itis," on the other hand, was welcomed by Campbell Stephen (I.L.P.) who was sure there were lots of people sitting on the Government benches because of Laski-itis during the Election.

The Prime Minister seemed to share this view as he replied with a gentle cut at Mr Churchill. "The right honourable gentleman knows that, in common with himself, Professor Laski has a somewhat ebullient phraseology and at times is apt to be a little impulsive. He has a right to express his views. But Government policy is laid down by Ministers and therefore any newspaper or any foreign power or any politician who thinks otherwise is making a great mistake."

That was the last word on the subject from the great ones. It lingered for a month or two among the back-benchers and its final disappearance may be said to mark the complete recovery of the body politic from the fevers of the Election.

## CHAPTER THREE

# FACING THE FUTURE AT HOME

*We have before us a battle for the peace no less arduous and no less momentous than the battle we have lived through in the last six years. To-day the strategy begins to unfold itself. To-day we go into action. To-day may rightly be regarded as "D-Day" in the battle of New Britain.—Major Freeman.*

"It is vital to realise that we have come through difficult years and we are going to face difficult years and to get through them will require no less effort, no less unselfishness and no less hard work than was needed to bring us through the war. I know this is a hard saying to people who have worked so much and so hard and suffered so much, but it would be entirely wrong not to represent the facts perfectly plainly before the whole people of this country." Mr. Attlee also knew that with this honest statement of the position at home he was inviting comparison with some of the more heady electoral speeches as well as with the ringing tones and spacious gestures of the Leader of the Opposition, who had just hymned the noble opportunities inherited by the Government. "Freedom and abundance," Mr. Churchill had said. "These are our aims. We must try and share our blessings and not our miseries" Mr. Attlee, however, sturdily resisted the temptation to over-paint the horizon and kept his eyes resolutely fixed on the bleaker present—the "blood, sweat, tears and toil" of peace.

Underpinning the Government's policy was an evident determination to avoid the mistakes made after the 1914-18 war. Demobilisation was a case in point. Immediate disbandment of the forces was dismissed by Mr. Attlee as folly, leaving no forces in hand to prevent disturbances in Europe. But the rate of release would be accelerated, the call-up of younger men was to continue and within

two months over a million people would be released from munitions. Again there was a demand for goods and services so immense that it could only be filled by a fully efficient peacetime organisation of all the resources that could be employed—and that could not be achieved over night. If scarce goods were allowed to go to the highest bidders prices would rise and our limited resources would be wasted without any regard to the order of priority which the national interest demanded. The result would be inflation. The Government are determined that there shall be no inflation. We are determined that the great principle of fair and equitable sharing of resources which has been the basis of our national existence during the war, shall not be abandoned. We shall require the backing of all the people. Whatever controls they abandon the people must not abandon self-control.

This problem of the transition from war to peace had its other side the side of finance and trade. Here the Prime Minister stressed that however successful our efforts in the production of food on our own land we still had to import a very substantial proportion of our needs if the people were to be properly fed. Sooner or later we had to face the fact that we could only buy abroad if we paid for imports in goods and services. This aspect of the national economy was examined by Mr. Lyttelton for the Opposition. A former Minister of Production he makes his point with a literary rather than a rhetoric flourish. He illustrated the export problem with figures showing that our exports had fallen from £471 000 000 in 1938 to £256 000 000 in 1944. In volume taking 1938 as 100 they had gone down to 31 in 1944. Other Conservatives added to the picture. We had lost our overseas investments the interest on which paid for nearly one third of our imports. We owed in the sterling area between three and four thousand million pounds the equivalent of eight years pre-war export trade if we did not import at all. Allowing for the altered circumstances in the post-war world if our

imports were to reach the 1938 level we should have to export to the value of £1,200,000,000 Mr Lyttelton's conclusion was that we had to aim at a much higher target than a 50 per cent increase of our pre war trade and he hurried on to emphasize that the field of exports was the least suitable for Government regimentation, interference or control Swaddling clothes—and the export trade had plenty of them round it—were not the vestments of virility

During this speech it was noted that there was no representative of the Board of Trade on the Government front bench Earl Winterton (C), the "father" of the House and a stickler for Parliamentary punctilio, finally rose to demand "Where are the Ministers concerned?" Even the Opposition laughed at Neil Maclean's (Lab) quick retort "Organising the Gestapo!"

A firm declaration on financial policy was made by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Hugh Dalton. He insisted on a national plan for the use of our national resources in finance no less than in materials and labour. The Government's purpose was to carry out the principles of priority in the national interest in the allocation of available funds between different objects, including the re equipment of our major industries, such as iron, steel and cotton.

In brief, the general policy was demobilisation geared into the industrial transition and that transition protected from inflation and guided in the national interest by Government control, while national priorities of production were carefully allotted between the export and home markets by control of materials and finance and guidance of labour.

There remained several outstanding internal problems particularly the serious coal situation, which in turn raised the whole issue of nationalisation. If this was really the best way of securing a larger supply of coal at a cheaper price and at an earlier moment than was then in view Mr Churchill said that he for one would approach the plan in a sympathetic spirit—but it was an adroit if

Other Conservatives were not so accommodating. Colonel Ropner said that for the sake of political aims or ideals there had been a determination among those who claimed to lead the miners that the industry should not be allowed to succeed under a system of private enterprise. This hostile view was tempered by a reasoned argument from David Eccles (C). He thought no sensible man would oppose the principle of nationalisation of public enterprise in all its forms and he admitted that coal would have to be a high priority but he was not so sure about the stated programme. The war had left our whole economy out of joint. Certain industries such as radio and aircraft were topheavy. Why was not attention paid to these instead of to stable industries like transport and electricity? The Government was selecting the wrong industries for State control out of consideration for Socialist doctrines that had been in pickle for thirty years.

Housing was the other great internal problem. The Government did not deal with this in very great detail in this general debate. Mr Attlee excused the absence of a Minister of Housing from his Government on the ground that any drastic reorganisation would require legislation and involve delay. Then that meant that there were still too many Ministries connected with housing argued Derek Walker Smith (C). Who was to co-ordinate them and who was to co-ordinate the co-ordinators? To emphasize them too much was to invite the comment

I see the snaffle and curb all right  
But where's the blinkin' horse?

R. A. Butler also took occasion to twit the Government on this unfulfilled Election promise. Instead of a Minister of Housing the Prime Minister announced baldly that the Minister of Health was to be responsible. This is the start of the new world!

This brought from Arthur Greenwood Lord Privy Seal the jovial riposte. We have had some revolutions quite recently. But for Mr Butler to be a spur to the Govern

ment strikes me as the most fundamental revolution that has ever taken place in this House of Commons

Mr Butler's main concern in the housing problem was with rural housing. He feared that unless rural houses could be quickly provided the countryside would not have the population necessary to ensure the requisite supplies of food. In this he was supported by Labour members. Many people it was said thought of slums only in connexion with towns but in comparison with the number of houses there were far more slums in the country than in the towns. More than 50 per cent of the rural population were without electricity, gas, a piped water supply and main drainage. How could the young people be attracted to agriculture so long as these conditions persisted or so long as technical education in agriculture on a par with industrial education was denied to them? No wonder they drifted to the towns. They thought that was where people with brains ought to go.

Quite another viewpoint was stated by Mrs Manning whose speech in this debate earned for her the title of the authentic voice of the unsung heroines of the war the housewives. Many women she thought would be only too willing to found families if they were given homes. They would not stop to ask whether the houses were temporary prefabricated or permanent so long as they could get away from mothers in law and other in-laws. That was not so easily done by the working and professional classes. They often had to build a modest competence before they could raise families and many women who had been engaged for years had seen the best years of their lives passing by together with their chance of motherhood.

In all this discursive debate on the King's Speech the true blast of controversy was really felt on only two topics the National Health Service and the proposed repeal of the Trade Disputes Act. On the first the Minister of Health was given notice that he was in for trouble. Sir Henry

Morris Jones (L Nat) claimed to be speaking for 95 per cent of the medical profession when he said that the Government would be up against the biggest fight they had ever tackled if they tried to make the great profession of medicine a State salaried civil service. On the Trade Disputes Act, Mr Churchill thought that it did not say much for the confidence with which the TUC viewed the brave new world or for what they thought of progressive nationalisation of our industries, that they should deem it necessary to restore and sharpen the general strike weapon. Perhaps it would be said that these powers would only be needed if the Tories came into office. Surely these were early days to get frightened! Mr Attlee's retort was that this Act had to a large extent poisoned the industrial life of the country. It had deprived great bodies of citizens of their right of free association which they had enjoyed for years without abuse. He would therefore enlist Mr Churchill's support, as a libertarian, when the repealing Bill was introduced.

The debate was concluded by Herbert Morrison, Lord President of the Council. Throughout his speech there was observed a certain restiveness on the Opposition front bench, the centre of which was Winston Churchill. There could be no doubt that there was something about Mr Morrison's manner that irritated the Opposition. Perhaps he was a little cock a hoop, a trifle provocative. At any rate it was something to which they were not yet acclimatised.

Our short term policy," he said, "will be part and parcel of a wider long term policy with a free and prosperous Britain in view. The total national expenditure must be shaped ahead so as to prevent us on the one hand, from engaging in excessive expenditure leading to inflation and on the other, from deficient expenditure leading to depression and mass unemployment. We shall promote social security. We shall proceed to measures for the proper use of the land and the proper organisation of industry. We

shall see that the land is used in such a way that in town and country alike it serves the best interests of the community. We intend to overhaul British industry and pull it together. ('Pull it to bits,' muttered Mr. Churchill.) In agriculture we shall have a policy of vigour, a policy giving security to the farmer as long as there is enterprise and a fair deal not only to the farmer but to the agricultural worker. Where necessary we shall socialize, but we are determined that both in publicly and privately owned industries efficiency must be the test and efficiency must be developed to the utmost. Where we socialize fair and proper compensation will be paid. We shall stop harmful, restrictive practices which prevent the most effective use of the country's resources.

"In all this there is no real threat to civil liberty or the real freedom of the individual. On the contrary, the liberty and real freedom of the people have been circumscribed and shamefully limited over long years by the economic imperfections of our industrial organisation and sometimes by the tyrannical use of economic power. All this development and economic change, the emergence of a nation which is for the first time the master and not the victim of its industrial resources, spell emancipation in many ways and a higher standard of liberty than they have ever enjoyed before for millions of our fellow citizens. So we go forward to the building of a Britain that is free, democratic, efficient, public-spirited, a Britain whose material resources are organized in the service of the British people."

After the loud cheers which greeted this peroration, the House proceeded to agree to the motion for the address. So the Government "tucked themselves in" to the satisfaction of their supporters in the House and the country. The difficulties had not been shirked, nor the high hopes dashed. Labour Ministers had shown themselves eminently capable of holding their own against the slings and arrows of the Opposition, although, in truth, they had not much to contend with there. So little, indeed, that the cry went

up from the Socialists 'I fear the Greeks when they come bearing gifts' There was even some uneasiness about this among Opposition backbenchers themselves One reminded his fellows of Malcolm's counsel of despair

'Let us seek out some desolate shade and there  
Weep our sad bosoms empty'

and suggested that they might well adopt Macduff's more robust advice

Let us rather

Hold fast the mortal sword and like good men  
Bestride our down fall'n Birthdom

But despite this excusable weakness in a Party very surprised to find itself sitting on the wrong side of the House the constitutional omens were propitious In the addition to the essential agreement to differ which is fundamental to the working of the party system there was the equally essential everyman's land of common ground upon which the two sides could agree Mr Butler for instance believed that the country stood before the world as a living social experiment To him the great question before the country and before the world was Could we retain the freedom and initiative of the individual and the sanctity of the human personality in a period when it was fashionable to give more and more power to the State? While Herbert Morrison thought that it would be a peculiar and outstanding contribution of British genius to political science and administration if it showed the world that a planned economy and an industry organized for the common good were reconcilable with political democracy and individual liberty Here was common ground enough —would this Parliament see the solution of the problem?

On this first showing the outlook was hopeful Very little driftwood had come in on the Labour tide and the Opposition was still large enough to find able and experienced men to match the variety of talent old and new which Labour could deploy It was a Parliament of practical experience in every branch of national life a Parliament

which was a true cross-section of the community, capable of reflecting every shade of political and sectional opinion, at once a sensitive sounding-board and a powerful instrument of the will of the people.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE CHARTER AND THE BOMB

*We, the peoples of the United Nations, determined—  
to save succeeding generations from the scourge of  
war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold  
sorrow to mankind and  
to reaffirm faith in the fundamental human rights, in  
the dignity and worth of the human person in the  
equal rights of men and women and of nations  
large and small, and  
to establish conditions under which justice and respect  
for the obligations arising from treaties and other  
sources of international law can be maintained and  
to promote social progress and better standards of life  
in larger freedom and for these ends—  
to practise tolerance and live together in peace with  
one another as good neighbours, and  
to unite our strength to maintain international peace  
and security, and  
to ensure, by the acceptance of principles and institu-  
tion of methods, that armed force shall not be used  
save in the common interest, and  
to employ international machinery for the promotion  
of the economic and social advancement of all  
peoples  
have resolved to combine our efforts to accomplish  
these aims—Preamble to the Charter of the United  
Nations*

AFTER four days in which the eyes of Parliament had travelled over the gaunt landscape of ravaged Europe and confronted the vast problems of peace, it followed that they should proceed at once to considering how best to restore the world to some semblance of order and thereafter to establish conditions of peace. For weeks at San Francisco delegates from the United Nations had been wrestling with the task of creating a world organisation for this purpose and the outcome was the United Nations Charter. This

Parliament was now met to ratify

The House had the benefit of the presence of three members of the British delegation. These three, in their contrasting styles, gave their various accounts of the Conference and the decisions reached there. Modest Mr. Attlee was so objective in his full and factual survey that it was easy to forget the major role he himself had played in shaping the decisions he was outlining. Not so Ellen Wilkinson and Anthony Eden, who both brought with them the atmosphere of the conference room, Miss Wilkinson still passionately knocking sense into obdurate heads and Mr. Eden still displaying the disarming advocacy of an experienced diplomat.

Mr Attlee began by quoting in full the Preamble to the Charter which had been largely inspired by Field Marshal Smuts. These were the aims and principles to which the United Nations had dedicated themselves. But, he went on, without their genuine acceptance mere machinery would be useless. If a Great Power resolved not to carry them out, no paper provisions could restrain it.

With this solemn warning, the Prime Minister turned to the machinery. First there was the General Assembly of the 50 nations with power to consider any matters affecting the peace of the world and to make recommendations about it, unless it was subject at the time to the deliberations of the Security Council. This Council was to consist of five permanent members and six members who changed from time to time. Collective security, he stressed, was not merely a promise to act when an emergency occurred, but it was an active co-operation to prevent emergencies occurring. In the past the League of Nations too often came into action at too late a stage and he hoped that error had now been corrected. What was wanted was a continuous discussion of international affairs, not spasmodic action at times of crisis.

One of the most critical debates at San Francisco had turned on the veto accorded to any one of the five permanent

members of the Security Council enabling it to block any action agreed upon by the rest in any matter in which itself was concerned. This it had been suggested, gave the Great Powers the right to be judges in their own cause. But it had been agreed that this matter could not be settled by the simple method of putting all States completely on a level oblivious of their population extent and power. The small States ultimately accepted the broad lines of the Great Powers' proposals appreciating that the basis of the Charter corresponded to the realities of the situation that existed in the world today.

The Conference had been very conscious of the need for dealing with the economic and social causes of war through international co-operation. There was a general feeling that peace was not negative but positive. The Economic and Social Council had been made a principal organ of the United Nations. It was charged with promoting higher standards of living, full employment and conditions of economic and social progress and development as well as solutions of international economic, social, health and related problems, international cultural and educational co-operation and a universal respect for the observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction of race, sex, religion or language. There were also provisions for bringing specialised agencies such as the International Labour Office and the Food and Agricultural Organisation into relationship with the new organisation.

Finally Mr Attlee stated that the coming of the atom bomb faced all with the naked choice between world co-operation and world destruction. Here was a great instrument ready to be used in the interests of world peace and prosperity. It was a step forward in the international organisation. But it was not a final step. The Charter itself could be amended as a result of experience but its existence was itself a sign that the nations of the world realised that without co-operation for peace there could be

no security for any nation

Anthony Eden viewed the new organisation with the eyes of a working diplomat. Some form of world organisation to deal with problems as they arose and at the pace at which they arose was something for which the world had been seeking he said. Not so very long ago the Foreign Secretary led a comparatively leisurely existence. Now the despatches had multiplied many times, space, which had once acted as a shock absorber, had been entirely overcome and events in any part of the world now had their immediate reactions in other parts of the world. That made the task of diplomacy infinitely more difficult and a world organisation was needed, not only to keep the peace but as a clearing house.

In his opinion the League of Nations had failed for two reasons. First the idea of one nation one vote led to Liberia being as important as the Soviet Union or Costa Rica as the United Kingdom. That was not a sound basis on which to found an international organisation because it was not a basis of truth. Secondly the League though conceived as universal was in fact never universal.

Another difference between the League and the Charter was that the League was part of the Treaty of Versailles and bound up with its fulfilment. Many nations supporting the League in the early days did so in the sense that they wanted something to buttress existing treaties and existing territorial settlements. But the San Francisco work had been done before the peace treaties and did not concern itself with enforcing this or that particular settlement of boundaries. One thing that discouraged America from remaining in the League after the last war was the fact that by doing so she would have been consenting to and in some way guaranteeing certain territorial settlements in Europe.

The League had also suffered because the definition of authority between the Council and the Assembly was bad and it was possible to refer matters back and forth between

the two and thus avoid facing issues which should have been faced. That was not possible now. The responsibility had been placed on the Security Council and only if it failed to fulfil its functions could the Assembly take up an issue with which the Council should deal. The presence of all the principal Powers on the Council was essential. Unless the Great Powers were going to agree and play their part in the world organisation that organisation could not function properly.

The debate that followed attained a very high standard. Every variety of speech was heard—the analytical and the passionate, the factual and the dramatic, the practical and the idealistic—and all were of a distinction that augured well for the future particularly as seventeen of the twenty-five backbenchers who caught the Speaker's eye were newcomers. Despite the arguments from the front benches members persisted in regarding the veto as a grave defect in the machinery of the world organisation. They felt that unanimity among the Great Powers was an insecure foundation on which to rest all the machinery of coercion and until the veto was withdrawn the Council could not be an effective world authority wielding unchallengeable power. Underlying this criticism of the veto was a strong suspicion that this was the old game of power politics all over again. The closest analysis along these lines came from Mr Martin (Lab) whose speeches always confirm the evidence of a brow sickled over with the pale cast of thought. He asked himself whether our foreign policy had been transformed as a result of the Charter. Our past policy was undoubtedly drafted into a system of power politics. Now Mr Bevin had recently stressed the extreme importance to us of the Middle East and the political and strategical significance of the Middle East were of first importance to us in a world based on power politics. So every step we took on the road of a policy that was constructed and designed—rightly—to defend the interests of this nation and Commonwealth in a world of power

politics carried us further and deeper still into that world of power politics and further away from the world of international co-operation

The basis of most members' suspicions of power politics, however, was considerably broader and rested on the regional groups which both America and Russia were busily establishing. These blocs or spheres of influence, particularly Russia's, had given them furiously to think and not a few were quite willing to urge upon the Government courses which in themselves smacked somewhat of power politics. For instance, Captain Gammans (C.), looking with envious eye at the Soviet Union's sphere of influence, embracing Poland, Czechoslovakia, the Baltic Republics and part of the Balkans, wanted Britain to have a regional pact of her own in Western Europe. The Western European way of life, he said, based upon Christianity, democracy and freedom of speech and conscience and also on a belief in the value of the human personality, had received in this war and the last an almost mortal blow. It would not be revived except by leadership from this country. Robert Boothby (C.) supported this, evading the charge of power politics by arguing that these regional groups were an essential prelude to any kind of global organisation and that three were infinitely preferable to two, particularly when those two were based respectively on a socialist and a capitalist system. Major Niall Macpherson (L Nat.) did not agree. The formation of vast blocs, each dominated by a Great Power, would give rise to jealousies. His remedy was to encourage the small nations to form their own unions. Mr Zilliacus (Lab.) accepted the view of Mr McGovern (I L P) that the world was set for a clash between Socialism and Capitalism, although not that the Charter was as a consequence before its time. In this social crisis Britain stood between the opposite poles of Russia and America. The real danger to peace was that the Big Five might break up because their two greatest members drifted apart. Nothing was likely

to threaten peace between ourselves and the United States, therefore our way to keep the Big Five together was to cleave to our alliance with the Soviet Union through thick and thin. We and France and the Soviet Union could co-operate and form a firm and enduring combination within the Security Council by dedicating ourselves to the reconstruction, unification and pacification of Europe. We should aim at turning the Anglo-Soviet and Franco-Soviet alliances into a comprehensive all-in agreement, embracing on the one side Britain, France and our Western European neighbours grouped in some form of economic and political union and on the other the Eastern European States associated with the Soviet Union.

Two opposite conclusions could be seen hovering at the back of these speakers' minds. One was that peace was already endangered by the formation of these power blocs and the other that they were all to the good in so far as they could be regarded as steps towards world government. Pending the establishment of world Government, many Socialists among them Miss Wilkinson, followed in the path of policy laid down by Mr Bevin a few days before and pinned their faith to the establishment of economic security throughout the world as the chief immediate hope of peace.

But whether the problem of carrying the principles of the Charter into effect was viewed from close at hand via the pros and cons of the veto or regional groups, or from the middle distance via economic reconstruction, or from afar, via a world government, it could not be said that the brickberches overflowed with optimism. Still less could it be said when the final and affrighting hurdle of the atomic bomb was contemplated. In the face of this who could blame the few members who abandoned argument in favour of a passionate plea for a burning faith in the Charter or for universal moral rearmament? The majority however demanded that the bomb and research into atomic energy should be put under international control its manufacture

supervised and its use vested in an International Police Force or the Military Staff Committee Sir Arthur Salter (Ind) thought there was still time for the first reaction to the bomb to be utilised quickly, skilfully and adequately in measures to control it Otherwise there was a danger that—

“Blood and destruction will be so in use  
And dreadful objects so familiar,  
That mothers will but smile when they behold  
Their infants quartered with the hands of war”

As things were, the military provisions of the Charter, if not of the whole organisation were obsolete The secret could not be kept permanently, was a frequent argument, and if the attempt to keep the secret was made it was going to be hard to remove the suspicion that still existed about our intentions towards the Soviet Union Oliver Stanley (C) however regarded it as fortunate that it was in the hands of a nation that could be trusted not to use it for aggressive purposes That gave us a breathing space to find out how it was to be controlled

Eileen Wilkinson was refreshingly brusque with the atomic bomb ‘The most destructive atomic bomb yet devised is the human mind’ she said ‘Today we see the trail of destruction that its misapplied energy has produced We must educate a whole generation of men and women to be fit to use the immense powers that are about to be discovered If we are to reap the fruits of the Charter we have to be willing for big new advances and a much bigger conception of the whole process of the education of our communities This has nothing to do with the atomic bomb Our social machinery is really not equipped to deal with the scientific progress we have had—never mind this new age of energy into which we are being ushered’

Equally refreshing and reassuring too was the final speech from the Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin gave the impression that he could handle Parliament, the Great Powers the world organisation itself with no more trouble

than he had encountered in handling the affairs of the Transport and General Workers Union. The Council could by a vote of seven be pointed out, of which three at least must be small States pass judgment on a Great Power and recommend what it considered the proper solution of a dispute should be. It was only when it came to sanctions for a breach of the peace that the assent of the Great Powers who were parties to a dispute was required. In other words the Great Powers had not taken obligations under the Charter to inflict sanctions upon one another. They had taken this course because such sanctions would mean a major war in which UNO as then constituted would inevitably perish. Therefore when the point was reached at which a sanction operated then the thing was over in any case.

What was necessary and what the Government intended to do was to make the Council a place where great questions of policy were resolved. That was the major function of the Council and they intended to do all they could to make it the very centre of the world's international affairs.

If peace is to be preserved it can only be as the result of creating conditions in which men no longer desire to go to war concluded Mr. Beyin. If the Security organisation cannot achieve this there is little hope for any of us or for the Charter. Unhappily national feelings, national suspicions and conceptions of sovereignty die hard. We cannot succeed in eradicating them without patient and continuous effort. The advance represented by the Charter would have been impossible had it not been for the Covenant of the League of Nations. If the Charter is worked it is not unreasonable to hope that as we build up and get agreement the veto of the Great Powers will slip into the background and be superseded by the procedure under the Charter itself on a wider basis and by the Assembly. At least that must be our aim.

Thus Parliament examined, discussed and finally approved the Charter. Thereafter they departed for a few

weeks' Recess before returning to deal with the less far-reaching, but politically more nourishing legislative banquet which legal draftsmen in many Government Departments were even then industriously preparing for their delight—or derision.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE BATTLE OF CONTROLS.

*Unless we get from Parliament the tools, we shall not be able to finish the job —Lord Chancellor*

*Government of civil servants for civil servants, by civil servants —Lord Brabazon*

PARLIAMENTARY democracy may be government by consent but it is also government by discussion and one of the major problems of the day is to find the time for full and adequate discussion of all measures necessary for running a modern State, whether it be along Tory or Socialist lines. In tackling this problem two tendencies have emerged. The first is a tendency on the part of the Government to engross more and more Parliamentary time for its own business, while denying to private members many cherished opportunities for bringing forward their own Bills and Motions. Before the war, generally speaking, members had Wednesdays and Fridays to themselves for Motions and Bills. But during the war the Government took all the time except Questions, the adjournment motion (now fixed at a daily half hour after Government business) and certain other days.

The second tendency is the growth of delegated legislation, a form of legislation over which Parliamentary control is limited. It is customary nowadays for Bills to provide that the Departments administering them may issue Rules and Orders which have the force of law. Most of these are laid before Parliament and, although they cannot be amended, they may be annulled if a motion to that effect is put down and carried. Such Parliamentary control might appear sufficiently effective but the increasing volume and complexity of modern legislation incurs the multiplication of Rules and Orders so that they run to many hundreds annually. Clearly, it is impossible for Parliament to discuss

every one of these fully but it was not until the wartime Acts and in particular, the Emergency Powers (Defence) Act began to spawn Rules and Orders so prolifically that Parliament asserted itself. The fruit of this assertion was the setting up in 1944 of a committee known as the Scrutinizing Committee with the function of examining Rules and Orders as they came up and drawing the attention of the House to those they thought merited consideration either because they were bad or as was more often the case, quite incomprehensible.

Both these tendencies had been apparent for at least half a century and had from time to time been the subject of controversy. But the advent of a Socialist Government to power threw them into greater prominence, for Socialist doctrine envisages a considerable extension of the State into the life of the nation inevitably involving especially at the outset a tremendous access of legislative energy with continuous additions to the mass of delegated legislation. It follows that the Government must demand more Parliamentary time at the expense of private members and it must indulge in Rules and Orders to an extent which might threaten to swamp existing Parliamentary control.

When therefore Herbert Morrison as Leader of the House took an early opportunity to move that the Government take all the time and set aside the rights of private members for the Session tame submission was not to be expected least of all from Sir Alan Herbert (Ind). This Punch humorist has a secure niche in Parliamentary fame as the private member who had been responsible for the famous Divorce Bill and he was therefore well qualified to argue the case for private members' Bills. He brought with him a bundle of Bills which it had been his intention to present had opportunity served. Man did not live by bread or even Beveridge alone, was his cry. It might be that when they heard that the Bank of England was to be nationalised agricultural workers would shout the glad tidings from hedge to hedge. He did not know. But he

did know that his Bills would have added much more quickly to the happiness of the people "I might just as well be a member of the Reichstag or a stuffed exhibit in the Natural History Museum," he complained "If I cannot present my Bills, I cast them onto the floor of the House as a monument to this interference with Parliamentary liberty and a challenge to despotic power" And there they lay for the remainder of the debate, forlorn and discarded

Labour members contended that they had been given a mandate for a certain programme and if there was a choice between carrying it out and allowing time to private members there was no doubt where their duty to the people lay The Opposition reply was that that argument could be put forward by any Government at any time and Mr Churchill spoke darkly of cramping and fettering the discussion and rights of the House Nevertheless Mr Morrison had a strong case and he urged it with that sweet reasonableness which is his other Parliamentary mood The Government's programme was very heavy There were arrears of legislation after six years of war and an urgent reconstruction job facing the country If the Government were to allow for private members' time there would be barely sufficient days left over to deal with more than four or five major Bills, if all stages were taken on the floor of the House The logic of the situation was clear enough, even if it ran counter to principle, and it was reflected in the Government majority of 187 in the first division of the new Parliament

More serious, at least in the eyes of the Opposition was the question of delegated legislation No one denied that during the war it had been necessary to canalize the national effort into the prosecution of total war and in 1939 no more than a single afternoon was devoted to the passing of the Emergency Powers (Defence) Act which gave the Government virtual control over the person and property of the citizen This Act was due to expire in

February, 1946 and with it the bulk of the controls would lapse. Already of the 687 wartime regulations in operation on VE Day 227 had gone. But the end of the war had not seen the end of grave shortages of every kind and if the Act were allowed to expire and nothing further were done inflation and general chaos were inevitable. To meet the situation the Government introduced two Bills the Supplies and Services (Transitional Provisions) Bill being the first. This was designed to keep alive the powers necessary for rationing, demobilisation and resettlement, price control and the concentration of production on essentials. It also gave the Government a firm grip on the supply of materials enabling them to make allocations between the home and export markets.

The powers asked for were very wide and in some respects vague and they were sought for five years. The Opposition bound as they were by the Coalition White Paper on Employment Policy which advocated the maintenance of controls during the transition period were obliged to support the Bill in principle, but they were also obliged by their political creed to point out that controls in their view whether necessary or not were evil things. There was also the suspicion that a Socialist Government using a transitory situation as a pretext might adopt these controls as a permanent policy. It was not surprising therefore that some passion was roused by the five year period. I was born a free citizen declared Sir William Darling (C). I have lived as a free citizen and I have as a soldier been prompted to fight for this land of liberty. Yet at the conclusion I have no hopes that the bonds of serfdom will be lifted from me. Five years is the sentence that will be laid upon me.

What type of freedom are you thinking of? was the Labour retort. Freedom to starve? Freedom for the unemployed man to waste his time at the Labour Exchange and for his house to be invaded by the Means Test man as between the wars? It was all very well to talk about the defence of the liberties of the subject against the incursions

of the State, said Herbert Morrison, but what the Government wanted was to defend the liberty of the subject against the incursions of property owners and profiteers

In the committee stage Mr Eden, moving an amendment to limit the duration of the Bill to two years, recalled that throughout the war years the Government had asked for these powers year by year—(Your own supporters couldn't trust you—Chuter Ede)—and on each occasion had had to submit to a severe cross questioning before they were granted. Was it that cross questioning the Government wished to avoid? Why, asked W J Brown (Ind.), was the Government with its overwhelming majority so reluctant to seek again in two years powers which they were in any case bound to secure? To these questions Chuter Ede's reply, though impressive, was irrelevant. Quoting the aphorism "Man learns nothing from history except that man learns nothing from history" the Home Secretary looked back at the economic abyss into which Britain had plunged when all the controls were swept away two years after the 1914-18 war. Judging by that experience the Government would certainly need most, if not all, of these powers in two years' time. Moreover, they had to be in a position to plan for at least five years ahead and they could not be expected to do so if their longterm planning was limited to two years.

In the Lords, the Lord Chancellor added a dash of piquancy to the discussion. Confronting there an Opposition majority of four to one, he thought they might agree to the Bill now, but might not be so amenable two years hence when the election and the Government mandate was more remote. Their Lordships were not averse to skating on this thin constitutional ice on the understanding of course, that it was all in fun. As Lord Samuel (L) said "You are chary of firing a gun if you know quite well the recoil will knock you over". In any case, argued the Marquess of Reading (L) either House could reject every one of the Orders made under the Bill if they so wished.

If they could be trusted to take a proper broad minded patriotic and statesmanlike view of the Orders as they came up why could not the Government have confidence in them to take a similar view of the whole Bill? Lord Brabazon (C) a hearty realist screwed comfort from the inevitable. To him it would be a mistake to limit the time period because it was through controls and interference with a freedom loving people that the Government would destroy themselves. Why save them from suicide?

Away from the duration issue the Opposition found themselves on more treacherous ground and there was some stink in James Maxton's (I L P) comment on their tactics. In the course of the debate he remarked one Conservative was surprised the next was amazed the third was astounded and the fourth had suffered very grave anxiety. Obviously the Opposition was in a bad mental state and he asked himself I wonder what will happen to these fellows when they come up against something serious? Their criticisms however succeeded in drawing from the Government clarification of the vaguer points although on one the definition of a fair price the lawyer members threshed about in some tangled legal undergrowth. It was suggested that the Minister of Supply could keep prices up by refusing to allow goods manufactured by private enterprise to be sold at a lower price than the same line of goods from one of the State owned factories. On the other hand it was only fair to the community that the Government should have counter powers to those previously and exclusively exercised by cartels and monopolies with their price rings to keep prices up for their own benefit and to the public detriment. Again a big producer in order to put smaller people out of business could sell at prices with which they could not possibly compete and only by fixing a minimum price could the Government give everybody coming back into business an opportunity of re-starting and maintaining their position. The case against the width of the powers conferred was

put broadly by Mr Manningham-Buller (C) who noted that the Government could control all charges made for services of any description. Were not wages charges for services? "So here we have a Socialist, not a Tory, Government seeking to obtain power to interfere with the free negotiation between trade unions and employers," he declared. "It is no use the Government saying that they will not do it and that they do not want that power. They could do it, and if they would not do it, then they are taking wider powers than are needed." The reply to this and similar charges was that the powers were admittedly wide, but they would be used reasonably and constructively. Moreover the Parliamentary safeguards had been strengthened and the instruments of control could be "prayed against" — or annulled — in either House.

A further criticism was that Government control hampered private enterprise, particularly in the field of export trade. Lord Woolton, in "another place," confessed himself appalled at the number of people of no commercial value employed in filling in forms and making records merely for the information of the Government. There was also the army of lawyers who had to be hired to watch the Orders and Regulations. What was wanted for the recovery of the country were producers and sellers of goods, not recorders, and he doubted whether civil servants, admirable administrators as they were, had the necessary intimate knowledge of business. The Government should make it easy for the business men to develop their trade and to know whether they could risk their money — which they were still prepared to do, because they rather liked the fun of the game. Lord Stansgate the Air Minister, leapt joyfully on this last remark. There was no fun of the game for the man who could not get a house because somebody was building a cinema, he said, or could not get soap because somebody was making lipstick or could not get a job for lack of direction which had resulted in a factory closing down. Similarly in the Commons Herbert

Morrison was very firm with all the fears and head shakings of the Opposition. These powers were not going to last longer than the public interest required he affirmed.

It is the public interest that is going to be the test and not any private interests that are trying to rattle this Government.

The second Bill the Emergency Laws (Transitional Provisions) Bill was of a more miscellaneous and limited character. It was a Bill of bits and pieces practically impossible to discuss on Second Reading when only the broad issues and principles raised by the Bill are in order. Since it was a Bill mainly to retain Regulations until the end of 1947 it was an unprincipled Bill and a large part of the debate was taken up with arguments with the Speaker on innumerable points of order. The 80 Regulations to be kept alive were very diverse. One was to ensure that people of the age of conscription did not leave the country and so dodge the column. One required nurses to continue in employment in mental institutions. Billeting powers were retained to help in the resettlement in employment. The Opposition did some industrious digging in this mixed plot and unearthed some legal oddities which presented a most unsavoury appearance. When cleaned and pared by the Government however most of these proved fit for public consumption and the Bill which had raised such cries of Totalitarianism passed its Third Reading in the Commons in a bare ten minutes.

## CHAPTER SIX

### HOUSING THE PEOPLE

*The man is a discharged seaman who was torpedoed  
He has a wife and their family consists of a boy of 14  
a girl of 12, a girl of ten a boy of eight a boy of six a  
girl of five a boy of two and a baby ten months old  
These ten people live in one room —Mrs Braddock*

HOUSING towered above all other domestic problems facing the country. For six years there had been virtually no house building, dilapidation had thrived unchecked and arrears of maintenance and repair had been piling up. The crude hand of war had dashed to the ground many of the slums that had befouled our cities but half a million condemned slum houses still awaited demolition. More than four million dwellings were over 80 years old and most of the farm workers' cottages were built over a century ago. Half of the houses in the country were without baths and to as many the term all modern conveniences was a mockery. Add to this the ravages of bomb and rocket—half a million houses destroyed beyond repair and waiting to be cleared from valuable sites and another three and a half million seriously damaged—and a story of human privation and suffering was unfolded instinct with those social consequences which prompted the bitter utterance of a Liberal. What is the use of a doctor trying to cure a disease when he cannot deal with the conditions of overcrowding and eradicate the cause? The teacher has the full force of environment against him. The minister of religion is fighting a losing battle.

Before the Government could look to the universal provision of comfortable adequate living space there was first the grave problem of overcrowding to be dealt with—a problem that was daily aggravated as the stream of demobilisation broadened and deepened. To relieve the

existing situation alone two and a half million houses were required, while to achieve the ultimate aim the figure of eight million given by Lewis Silkin, the Minister of Town and Country Planning, seemed to most a reasonable figure and to many a conservative estimate. Two other factors intervened which together were to spell frustration to so many projects for many months to come—shortage of labour and materials. Compared with a labour force before the war of one million building operatives—one-third of which were engaged on maintenance and repairs—the best the Government could budget for was three-quarters of a million by the end of June, 1946, the smaller force to tackle an incomparably bigger job with the flow of material to work with reduced to a trickle.

To this problem, the new Housing Minister, Aneurin Bevan brought an entirely fresh approach. When in October early opportunity was taken to debate the housing position Mr Bevan gave what is known as a "good Parliamentary performance". On the lips of a critic this implies a sneer, but it was on this occasion sincerely meant. The brilliant thrust and slashing rhetoric of the backbench rebel were not entirely lost in the Minister, but responsibility seemed to have released in that passionate nature a broader vision which from time to time raised him above the polemics in which he had hitherto been so much at home.

He started from the premise that the housing problem for the middle classes had been roughly solved before the war, but for the lower income groups it had not been solved since the industrial revolution. According to figures given later, of the houses built by private builders between the wars just under a quarter were working class and under one twelfth were for letting. Of all the working class houses built, the private builders—speculative builders" Mr Bevan called them—provided just over one-third and the local authorities just under two thirds. Bevan proposed to reverse this order of things by solving first the difficulties

of the lower income groups, placing the main emphasis of his housing programme on building houses to let and using the local authorities as his main instruments. By this means he hoped to do away with unbalanced communities and the segregation of the different income groups. There would be no more "fretful fronts" stretching along the great roads leading to London, belonging to what one critic called the "Marzipan period". Variety of design would be the aim and the local authorities would be encouraged in their lay-outs to make provision also for the higher income groups at higher rents. All the age groups would be found hospitality in their schemes and the old people would not be asked to live in colonies on their own "After all, they don't want to look at endless processions of funerals of their friends, they also want to look at processions of perambulators".

The only crumb of comfort offered to private builders and those who wanted to own their own houses was a proposal to raise the limits under which the local authorities could lend money for house-building and the granting of permission to local authorities to license private building for sale up to a limit of £1,200 in the provinces and £1,300 in London, but it was obvious that this permission would not be granted if building and labour were thus to be diverted from the public housing programme. Moreover, houses so built were not to be sold speculatively for four years—by which time Mr Bevan hoped the housing stringency would be removed.

The Opposition leapt on these last proposals, complaining that the Minister was approving tenders for local authorities at much higher figures than the maximum allowed for private enterprise houses. If the Government relied on the local authorities alone to absorb all the building labour throughout the country there might arise the paradox of millions of people wanting houses and substantial unemployment in the building industry.

Mr Bevan's approach to land and money was similarly

trenchant. When the land was wanted for an airfield during the war there were no protracted negotiations with the landlord, and he was determined that there would be none when land was wanted for houses. It was a form of control the Government was going to remove. As for money, he was anxious about the large amount available to building societies—many of whom were no more than money lending societies. He was not going to let loose this vast mass of accumulated money on a scarcity market and encourage people to acquire mortgages that would be a millstone round their necks.

Finally, the Minister refused to be drawn into quoting figures. He had enquired into the basis of the figures quoted by the Opposition and he could find no basis whatever for their estimates. 'I am not going to do any of that crystal gazing. We have had too many programmes. It is time we had some houses. If you tie yourselves to figures you become a victim of the importunities of undesirable elements. These are the building contractors who want to hold the public up to racketeer prices and if they know the Minister has committed himself to a certain number of houses in a particular time they will use that as a lever against him.'

The Opposition based their criticism on rural housing and the discouragement of private enterprise in building. Robert Hudson (C) saw the less urgent claims of rural housing being once again pushed into the background. Substantial increase of manpower on the land was needed if the level of essential production was to be maintained and 300 000 houses were required—100 000 in the first two years—in order to provide accommodation for the new intake. In that case why was the Housing (Rural Workers) Act for the reconditioning of farm cottages not to be renewed? Reconditioning could be started on a substantial scale while getting ready to start the building scheme. Mr Dye (Lab) opposed this. Money spent on reconditioning tied cottages added to the value of the farm

or estate on which they stood. It would not matter if there were only a few, but in village after village 90 per cent. and sometimes 100 per cent. of the cottages were tied and when the occupant left his job, for whatever reason, he and his family had to move out.

Aneurin Bevan said he was not against the Act, but they wanted to build houses for agricultural workers in which they were free people. Most of the houses that were reconditioned were tied cottages. If the building workers in the locality were engaged in reconditioning, the local authorities would have no workers for new house building. Furthermore, repair labour was the most highly skilled and the most expensive. That labour should go into the new house building with other workers training alongside it. If it was allowed to go into all kinds of complicated repair work where apprentices were not with it, they would not get the building force needed for the job.

After this statement of intention the Ministry of Health proceeded with legislation. The big Bills had to wait a little but one emergency measure roused considerable interest. Thousands of marriages had taken place during the war and as demobilisation got under way more and more couples were looking for accommodation as an alternative to living with mother-in-law. Both the shortage of houses and the scarcity of furniture made it virtually impossible to set up house and furnished rooms were thus at a premium. To protect them from what Aneurin Bevan called the harpies who battened upon them, particularly in London and the big cities, the very human Furnished Houses (Rent Control) Bill was introduced. Under it, wherever local authorities required them, rent tribunals were to be set up. If a tenant considered his rent too high he could take his complaint to the local authority and seek to have his case put before the tribunal. It would then be considered on its merits and if the tribunal saw fit they could order the reduction of the rent, which would thereafter be the registered rent of that letting.

Several difficulties arose in this simple scheme. There is no standard rent and Mr Bevan allowed humanity to prevail over principle by admitting that different rulings in different districts might be more just than the same ruling everywhere. Suggestions were made that even in the same house there was a case for variations. At holiday resorts for instance the rent varied in and out of season. A man might let a room to a friend who was rather hard up at a low rent but then the friend might enter a period of affluence and refuse to pay a higher rent. Again the cost of fuel and wages had gone up considerably and landlords of service flats might reasonably want to raise rents to meet these increased costs. In such cases the tribunals would be powerless since they could only approve or reduce the existing rent.

A more serious difficulty was that of the landlord who had been compelled to reduce his rent and who then revenged himself by clearing the tenant out and the tenant would have difficulty in getting other accommodation—particularly as he would be unlikely to get a reference from the landlord. This launched a discussion of the sins of landlords in which only one champion was found. This was Mrs Jean Mann (Lab) who thought that landladies were often fine motherly creatures who put up with a great many hardships and always charged reasonable rents. The tenant on the other hand could be a very disturbing factor in an otherwise peaceful house. There might be a wild set of people who would burn gas and electricity at all hours blare out their wireless into the early hours of the morning and take a great deal more abuse than use out of an apartment. She also made a shrewd guess that the local authorities might be more sympathetic with the static rate-payer than the bird of passage who flitted from furnished room to furnished room.

Most of the objections were met during subsequent stages of the Bill. Security of tenure to the tenant was given up to three months the period being left flexible because the

tribunal would be able to assess the emotional relationship between landlord and tenant and judge accordingly. An appeal could also be dismissed, thus allowing a landlord to increase his rent when the original letting had been on a friendly basis and finally power was given to increase the rent where it could be shown that since 1939 the cost of the services had gone up. It was a temporary Bill and would expire at the end of 1947. This was Mr Bevan's own estimate of the period when the worst housing stringency would have ceased to exist and no doubt this sentiment was responsible for the happy atmosphere in which the Bill was discussed.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### THE UNEASY PEACE

*Unless we can catch up politically to the point we have reached in science, we shall all be blown to smithereens*  
—Anthony Eden

It was clear from the sombre and even intimidating turn that world affairs had taken in the Autumn that the honey moon of victory was over. Europe seemed tranced at the very gates of peace and each and every effort of statesmen to throw them wide was mutually frustrating. The Council of Foreign Ministers, which had met for the first time in London to discuss some of the peace treaties, had foundered on the intransigence of Mr Molotov, the Soviet Foreign Minister. Mr Bevin was resigned, but hopeful. "Perhaps we were a little too close to two great victories," was his comment. "We must all continue to apply patience and understanding to each other's difficulties."

But while such difficulties were paralysing the Great Powers conditions in Europe had deteriorated alarmingly. The end of the war had left something like 25,000,000 people wandering about Europe in all directions, transport was hopelessly inadequate to distribute the scanty supplies of food and fuel and there was a grave possibility that millions might die of starvation and cold in the winter and that disease and economic and social chaos might spread over Europe. The position in Germany was aggravated by its division into the four zones which tended to grow more rather than less watertight. This was the price we were now paying for not planning in advance what to do with Germany when she was defeated, suggested Mr Crossman (Lab.). Unconditional surrender was not only a formula for a tough policy for Germany but a formula to avoid discussing Germany's future.

On these questions the Foreign Secretary was manifestly

in the toils. He had to confess that through no fault of ours, all that could be done was not being done. The shortages in Europe were due in part to the failure of the exporting countries to make a maximum contribution to the needs of the world. Wheat was being fed to livestock in North America for lack of feedingstuffs and maize was being burned in South America for lack of fuel. The common sense thing to do would be to send oil to the Argentine take maize from the Argentine for feedingstuff for America Canada and ourselves and then divert wheat to Europe. But politics intervene he added with a sigh.

In Europe itself much could be done if they could get strategy and spheres of influence out of the picture and set up commissions for the vital waterways. This would not endanger Russia or any other country one iota but it had to be considered and so things had to be left to the military commands with the result that parts of the rivers were used and parts were not used at all. Only the Russians knew how many Germans had gone from Germany to work in Russia. But the people coming into the Western zone were in the overwhelming majority women and children with no men. This meant manpower shortage in the fields.

Wider aspects of policy were discussed in two debates which took place in November before and after the visit of the Prime Minister accompanied by Sir John Anderson chairman of the advisory committee on Atomic Energy to America and Canada. Prior to the first debate President Truman in his famous Twelve Point speech had declared America's intention of keeping the secret of the bomb for the time being. Also there had been a statement by British and American scientists urging disclosure and even suggesting that they might take the responsibility for disclosure themselves. Mr Churchill reflecting that scientific knowledge had outstripped human virtue still hoped that men were better wiser and more merciful than they were ten thousand years ago and noted the valuable growth of public opinion. "We understand our unhappy lot, even if

we cannot control it' In the circumstances he did not favour disclosure During the war we had imparted many of our secrets to Russia but we were not conscious of any adequate reciprocity and if the secret were Russia's it certainly would not be shared As for any scientist who attempted to divulge the secret to any foreign country, the utmost rigour of the law should be brought against him In this Mr Bevin concurred affirming that the Government could not surrender either their power or their duty in the field of Government to any section of the community He also dismissed the idea that the bomb would wipe out the need for armies navies and air forces Over any long period of time most of the duties of the Services were police duties and he did not suppose anybody would suggest that every time somebody became obstreperous one should fetch out an atomic bomb !

On his return Mr Attlee amplified the Joint Declaration on atomic energy made by himself President Truman and the Premier of Canada He was broadly hopeful but cautious in particular With his unique ability to discern and expound major historical trends he set the problem in a new perspective In the past he said nations could measure the losses likely to be encountered in war and weigh them against possible gains When the weapons were as primitive as they now seemed to us the cost often seemed worthwhile But such grim calculations were not possible to our generation The atomic bomb—which might not be itself the last word in destructiveness—had brought home that if civilisation was to survive there could be no repetition of the first and second world wars In a warring world there could be no set of Queensberry rules No system of inspection or control of weapons would work without international good will and no international organisation however carefully framed, would be of any avail unless the nations resolved to lay aside war and the threat of war as instruments of compulsion and determined to establish between themselves such mutual confidence

that war was unthinkable. It was well to remember, he added, that such confidence was already established over great areas of the earth's surface. War between Britain and any of the Dominions was unthinkable, war between Britain or Canada or any one of the Dominions and the United States was unthinkable.

To the end of spreading this mutual confidence, the three countries concerned in the discovery and development of atomic energy had already made available to the world the basis scientific information essential to its development for peaceful purposes. But such development was not likely to be perfected for many years and meanwhile the methods and processes already developed could lead to either peaceful or destructive purposes. Would it be wise, when the United Nations organisation was only just born and not yet out of its cradle, to broadcast to the world the methods of making such a destructive weapon? This was a matter which could not be solved by Britain, Canada and the United States alone. They declared therefore their readiness to share with other nations on a reciprocal basis the practical industrial applications of this discovery just as soon as effective enforceable safeguards could be devised.

Mr Eden agreed that no safeguards by themselves would provide an effective guarantee. They had to be accompanied by the acceptance of the rule of law amongst the nations. Every succeeding scientific discovery made greater nonsense of old time conceptions of sovereignty, yet national sentiment was still as strong as ever and, despite some stirrings, the world had not, so far, been ready to abandon, or even really to modify, its old conceptions of sovereignty.

The backbenchers as a whole approached the subject in a more chastened mood than hitherto. Labour speakers saw the bomb as an instrument of power politics, as the source of Russian suspicion and the main feature in a suicidal arms race of the future. Kenneth Pickthorn (C) had little patience with talk of it ushering in a new era.

He had seen no less than 17 new eras since he had been a member of the House. But he was concerned with the rule of law and stressed that in the same way as it was no good Governments putting their signatures to forms of words to which they severally attached different meanings, so there should be some objective standard by which things were judged in law. People should feel that they were not judged at the convenience of party or race, that what was sauce for the goose was sauce for the gander and if a Chilean was run in for bigamy an Argentinian could not get away with two.

The least disturbed by the atomic bomb appeared to be the Foreign Secretary. He admitted that he had never once allowed himself to think that he could arrive at this or that decision because Britain was or was not in possession of the atomic bomb and this "sufficient for the day" demeanour was readily understood by those who watched him in these two debates continuing his mansur struggle against frustration. Still he uttered his clarion call for patience and again he appealed to the Great Powers to put their cards on the table face upwards. "We are ready to do it. We will take no steps, we will do nothing to stir up hatred or provoke or create a situation detrimental to Russia in the Eastern countries. I am not prepared to accept the contention, so often blared from Moscow Radio, that Russia claims to have the right to have friendly relations with her near neighbours even as President Roosevelt claimed a good neighbour policy for South America, while I am to be regarded as a criminal if I ask to be on good relations with nations bordering on the British frontiers. We have met every demand we ever thought would be made by Russia. I must say that having conceded all this and not having taken one inch of territory or asked for it one cannot help being a bit suspicious if a Great Power wants so to speak, to come across the throat of the British Commonwealth which has done no harm to anybody and has fought this war. I think we must get down to stopping this demand.

for transfer of territory and, within reason make adjustments here and there. It is of little value. All this chopping and changing of frontiers over hundreds of years has made people very little richer or more secure."

Now that the conduct of foreign policy has left the ante rooms of the Chancelleries of Europe for the radio and the public platform, such statements in the House of Commons have a twofold importance. They are contributions not only to the debate in the House but also to the worldwide debate which is always taking place between the statesmen of the world. It follows that a Foreign Secretary, mindful that his words will be studied by the heads of other nations cannot, as of old, adopt a Party stance in the House and another stance when he finds himself in conclave with foreign representatives.

It is a tribute to Mr Bevin to say that he labours under this disadvantage without discomfort. Again and again his speeches are greeted by cheers from the Opposition benches and with silence by his own supporters but he keeps unflinchingly to his national brief. I have been told that when the Opposition cheer me I am wrong he said on one occasion. But you cannot carry out a foreign policy on a very narrow or limited basis. Neither can you alter history by a slogan. For the House as a whole too it must be said that there are few attempts to make capital out of this. A mild exception during the second November debate was Brigadier Fitzroy Maclean (C) who could not resist speculating what would have been the reaction of the Labour Party if such a crisis in our relations with Russia had arisen with a Tory Government in power and went on to urge the Government to emulate the hard headed realism and sense of national interest upon which Russian foreign policy was based. We cannot really complain if someone else moves into the void we have created by our own inertia he said. While the Russians are firmly establishing themselves in Eastern Europe we are fading out of the Mediterranean. While they lay claim to Tripolitania

so recently liberated by British armies we discuss how quickly we can get out of Egypt and the Sudan. While America establishes bases in the Pacific we start moving out of India and Burma. Such an attitude will not win us respect from our Soviet allies or from anybody else.

This was the summit at that time of Conservative criticism of the Government's policy. The more bitter attacks came from those Socialists to whom Russia seemed incapable of wrong and from those who still asserted that the Government were using British troops in Greece to support a near Fascist regime and in Indonesia to quell the legitimate aspirations of the Indonesians for independence. For the most part speeches were constructive rather than critical. There were for example suggestions for dealing with the sensitive areas of the world where the strategic and economic interests of the Great Powers were likely to clash such as in the Middle East the Far East and South Eastern Europe. Mr Zilliacus (Lab) thought that the strategic difficulty could be solved by establishing United Nations bases in those areas although in a later debate Brigadier Head (C) in a brilliant strategic analysis suggested that the three Powers should get together and delineate the areas of strategic soreness and having drawn the lines agree to stick to them—as had been tacitly done in the Balkans and Poland areas of extreme strategic sensitivity for Russia. The economic difficulty could be overcome in the view of Maurice Edelman (Lab) by setting up trading corporations on which all the nations interested could sit.

In the second debate thwarted from the East and the West in his attempts to set Europe on the right path to economic reconstruction Mr Bevin rested for a moment on his faith in the common people. There has never been a war yet which if the facts had been put calmly before the ordinary folk could not have been prevented. The common man is the great protection against war. Upon Parliament fell the supreme power of deciding matters affecting the life

and death of the people. He would merge that power into the greater power of a directly elected world assembly and he was ready to sit with anybody of any party or any nation to try to devise a franchise or a constitution for such a world assembly, with a limited objective—the objective of peace.

None could help but agree, but there were many who reflecting on the state of the world must have thought that it would take some very uncommon men to set up such an assembly.

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## CHAPTER EIGHT

### A PLANNED ECONOMY

*The men who make the goods will receive all the assistance that the men who make the money can give—Lord Pakenham*

*A series of plans designed to construct a Maginot Line against the economic dangers of the thirties—Nigel Birch*

On October 29, 1945 the Bank of England Bill passed its Second Reading in the Commons. Although in years to come those present on that occasion may only retain an impression of gaiety on the Government side of the House and of an oddly dim and demure Opposition, nevertheless that day will always be prominent in the history of the struggle of Parliament and people for economic liberty.

It is true that superficially the Bill to nationalise the Bank of England merely legalised an existing situation. Over a long period relations between the Bank and the Treasury had been very close and as the Chancellor of the Exchequer said the time had now come when the Old Man of the Treasury and the Old Lady of Threadneedle Street should be legally married. It is also true that interest centred more in the manner than the matter of this first step in nationalisation. Supporters of the Bill soon showed that it was something more than making an honest woman of the Old Lady. In the planned economy envisaged by the Government the State had to have power to ensure that the supply of money was adequate to the national needs and the banking system with its power to create money could decide at any given time the volume of purchasing power in the country. How the control of credit by the central bank brought the working population into the picture was well illustrated by W J Brown (Ind) when rebutting the charge that the Bill was unnecessary. To

say it does not matter that there should be a power in England, outside the law and not subject to the law, which has in its hands to put 3,000,000 men out of work or 3,000,000 men into work, by altering the credit policy of the banking system—if that does not matter, what does matter?" Under the Bill responsibility for these things would be lodged directly with the Government. The Chancellor of the Exchequer would be answerable for them to Parliament and the people and there would be an end of shuffling the blame to and fro between the Bank and the Treasury. Members could, and undoubtedly would, continue to talk of "the dead hand of the Treasury," but no more of "the hidden hand of finance."

The machinery of the Bill was quite simple. the Treasury to take over the whole of the existing capital stock of the Bank—£14,500,000, paying an average dividend of 12 per cent—and issue in exchange to stockholders £58,000,000 worth of Government stock at 3 per cent, the Governor, his Deputy and the Court of Directors to be appointed by the Government, the Government to issue such directions to the Bank of England as might be necessary in the public interest, and the Bank of England to have power to request information from and issue directions to the joint stock banks

"We plan for full employment and full production, for an expansive economy, for an increasing trade, both at home and abroad, and especially, in the early years of reconstruction, against restriction and in favour of abundance," declaimed Hugh Dalton. "If this is to be done we must have the Treasury, the Central Bank and the clearing banks all pulling together. We cannot afford even the possibility of their pulling different ways."

Much of the subsequent debate was taken up by discussion of the past history of the Bank and of financial policy between the wars. All the old controversies—the General Strike, the depression, the downfall of the Labour Government of 1931, the Czech gold and the financial

appeasement of Germany—made their brief appearance and many speeches were haunted by the almost legendary figure of Montague (now Lord) Norman

The Chancellor had prefaced his exposition of the Bill with a jovial piece of ragging, brandishing a pamphlet, emblazoned with a large red 'V,' to boisterous applause from his supporters. This was not the first time the Opposition had had "Let Us Face The Future" thrust under their noses, nor was it to be the last, but this time it failed to goad them. Sir John Anderson, who led off for the Opposition, was not one to be goaded in any political sense, though the dignity of an ex-Chancellor might have been affronted by such unseemly romping by his successor to that high and austere office. His speech was described as "misty" in that he spoke of the Bill as unnecessary at one moment and of the "enormity of what was being done" the next. His chief anxiety was that international confidence in the Bank might be undermined by this change in its status and the short answer of the Government was that confidence was likely to be increased by State-ownership, as it would be thus brought into line with the central banks of all other nations who were members of the sterling group. In this connexion some play was made with the phrase "safe as the Bank of England." A rather meaning less phrase, was one opinion, seeing that the Bank was born out of the bankruptcy of a King and had gone bankrupt six times in the course of its existence. What was to be substituted for it? "Safe as Dr Dalton—as the Government—as No 10 Downing Street?"

Another issue was the compensation to stockholders, and here Sir J. Stanley Holmes (L Nat) raised a point which later kindled some Opposition fire. He wanted to know what were the reserves of the Bank, claiming that, whatever they were, they should be added to the value of the stock holders' shares. In the face of this "googly," the Chancellor and his Financial Secretary, Glenvil Hall, showed themselves traditional Treasury "stone wallers" but the impression

was left that these reserves lay behind Dr Dalton's confidence that he had made a good bargain for the State

On the proposals for the joint stock banks, it was argued that they gave the Government the right to interfere with private enterprise by controlling the right of these banks to give credit. They could be directed to support a particular industry to such an extent as completely to exhaust all their resources, to the detriment of all other industries. Such criticism the Chancellor had foreseen and characterised as "fanciful dangers, conjured up out of the depths of theorists' imaginations."

It was in the closing words of Oliver Stanley (C) that the real charge against the Bill lay. "We object," he said, "when there are so many real problems demanding the attention of the Government that the processes of the House and the time of its members should be wasted on a piece of political eyewash."

In the division the Bill passed its Second Reading by a comfortable majority of 131. One solitary, but by no means inconsiderable, Conservative voted with the Government "he hoped for the last time". Robert Boothby fortified himself for this act of defiance by a quotation from Abraham Lincoln. "The privilege of creating and issuing money is not only the supreme prerogative of the Government, it is the Government's greatest opportunity. Money will cease to be the master and become the servant of humanity. Democracy will rise superior to money power."

The companion piece to this Bill was discussed in February. This "latest stream lined legislative model" was the Investment (Control and Guarantees) Bill, later called the Borrowing Bill. Together these two Bills supplemented by financial controls the physical controls over the allocation of labour and materials. The object of this measure was to control the flow and direction of new money. In order to ensure that the order of priority for schemes for raising new capital should be determined by their relative importance in the national interest two new bodies were to

be set up. One, the Capital Issues Committee, acting as the executive instrument of the Treasury, would be the licensing authority for new issues, and the other, the National Investment Council, would advise and assist the Government in so organising and, when necessary, stimulating investment as to promote full employment. The Treasury was also empowered to guarantee loans up to £50,000 000 in any one year for the purpose of facilitating the reconstruction or development of an industry or part of an industry. This power of a guarantee was intended as an anti-slump weapon as well as a means of reconditioning industries not scheduled for nationalisation.

Finally, and this was the point at issue between the Government and the Opposition, the measure would be permanent. The case the Opposition argued was that whereas it was easy enough to decide what were the right priorities in the national interest during a transition from war to peace, when that period had passed and the markets were free there would be an increasingly wide divergence of opinion on what constituted national interest. How could priorities be determined when plenty replaced scarcity? No system of Gallup polls would ever tell the Government what the consumer wanted as accurately as a free market and price system. The people would not always want what the Government thought they ought to have.

Ralph Assheton (C) thought that there was a risk that the Government would make capitalism unworkable without putting anything in its place. If the Government owned everything they could in theory plan everything but if private business was to be allowed to continue how could business men plan their work many years ahead if they were uncertain whether or not they would be able to get capital for extension when the time came for them to need it? As for the National Investment Council—composed as it was of busy men like the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Governor of the Bank of England—it would not have time to carry out its functions. How often

could it meet? It would probably turn out to be like the Board of Trade, of which the Archbishop of Canterbury was a member, and which never met at all.

The ability of the Treasury to pick "winners" in the industrial stakes was also highly suspect. If the Bill had been introduced a hundred years ago, it was contended, we might never have seen the safety pin, the fountain pen, or blotting paper. One could imagine the Government saying "We have plenty of sand in this country to blot up the ink. What is this new-fangled idea of blotting paper?" They might claim to put their money in sound enterprises, but that generally meant enterprises that were sound twenty years ago. If we were to close the gap between exports and imports, said Brendan Bracken (C), it must be to our invention and skill in developing new lines that we must look—and not to the Treasury with its special aptitude for saying "No" in clear and chilling English. Treasury officials, continued this bluff and breezy politician, were undoubtedly the world's champions in procrastination, always delighting in the truth that a letter answers itself in time and with a reputation for killing even Government schemes by merely ignoring them. "Companies succeed in competitive business because they are run by men full of brains and with fire in their bellies—not the sort of men who can put up impeccable arguments to the Treasury."

Sir Frank Soskice the Solicitor General, stimulated no doubt by the easy air of genial controversy introduced by Brendan Bracken, defended the Bill in a looser and more outright style than is usually open to a Law Officer of the Crown. The existence of speculators and profiteers did not come to an end with the end of a world war, he said. They were an unpleasant nuisance which continued with us always. Thus, if the Bill had any value at all it had a permanent value. It was well, too, to remember in talking of discouraging enterprise and industry and so on that of every speculative hopeless enterprise which was undertaken on the financial market perhaps one out of every 500

succeeded. If all the Treasury did was to discourage 499 out of those 500 speculative enterprises it would perform an extremely useful function. In any case, the Bill and the Order under it, which exempted from control borrowings not exceeding £50,000 in any one year, dealt with big capital issues only. The small man who wanted to raise money could do so quite unhampered.

The Bill, to the Government's and Mr Gallacher's extreme annoyance, ran into trouble in the House of Lords, who sent it back to the Commons after defeating the Government with an amendment limiting its operation to five years. The Chancellor refused to tolerate "attempts by an unrepresentative body" to limit the power of the Government of permanently controlling access to capital, and Mr Gallacher (Comm) devoutly hoped the Commons would one day go round to the House of Lords and "put the lid on them". The motion 'that this House doth disagree with the Lords in the said amendment' was carried at the bleak hour of 3.24 one morning and later an amendment to meet another point raised in the Lords was inserted in the Bill as a sweetener. This little gesture went some way to appease their Lordships, whose prestige tends to increase in reverse ratio to their power.

## CHAPTER NINE

# THE HOUSING BIG THREE

*This terrible cat's cradle business of pulling all the bits and pieces together to build houses — Ian Orr-Ewing*

THE Government's housing policy was implemented by three Bills the first to be taken being the Building Materials and Housing Bill which provided the money for the Minister of Works to ensure that adequate supplies of building material and components including 'prefabs', were available and for assisting the local authorities in preparing sites and erecting houses. 'It is the intention of the Government to go into business in a big way in both the manufacture and distribution of building materials and components,' announced George Tomlinson, the Minister of Works.

The main principles of this Bill were bulk purchase and organised direct labour. At the same time the Government would themselves embark on manufacture in the Royal Ordnance Factories. Aneurin Bevan argued that only by placing bulk orders could the Government cost them and that if they merely allowed the building components industry to respond in normal fashion to the stimulus of private purchase from the building merchants, they could not put costing clauses in their contracts. Therefore bulk purchase was essential not only for standardising production, but for giving the Government effective control over the prices of building materials. The Opposition was not so optimistic. It had been tried without success after the 1914-18 war, they said. If the Government were to appear as the only buyer that would almost certainly send up prices as no one was so weak as the single buyer whose needs were known to be imperative. The Ministry of Works could get a corner in any particular materials and charge a price for them which included the interest charges of the Treasury.

and their own expenses and these prices might be higher than if the goods were bought direct from a local builder. Government supporters turned this argument round by referring to the rings, monopolies and cartels which had sprung up around the industry and quoted figures showing that the production of such materials as cement and such fittings as stoves and drainpipes were largely in the hands of two or three firms.

Coupled with bulk purchase was the Government system of distribution. A prefabricated temporary house was made up of between 2,500 and 3,000 separate parts made by 165 different firms. To enable the flow of parts from manufacturers to erection contractors to be regulated in accordance with site requirements, the Government had set up 31 distribution centres throughout the country. This did not please the Opposition either. Captain Marples (C), himself a builder, did not see why the job should not be left to the builders' merchants. The builders' merchants had to pay carriage for goods and they delivered direct to the site. This saved time and avoided double handling. But if there was double handling under the Ministry of Works organisation, as there would be, it was just too bad and the taxpayer had to foot the bill. Mr Bevan's short answer to this was that if the builders' merchants were doing the job efficiently and economically then the vast bulk of building materials would be distributed through those normal channels but if not, the Government would use their own distributive agencies.

Henry Willink, the former Minister of Health, was not as happy as his sobriquet over the aluminium house. He could not understand why the Government were planning to buy and erect far more of these most expensive houses than any other kind. Surely the great advantage in the factory made house was that it would be a competitor to the brick built house and so be a potent influence in bringing down housing costs, but that advantage might be lost if the House sanctioned unlimited money. Nor could a

Conservative architect Alfred Bossom understand why it should be so costly when the taxpayer had already paid for the aluminium to go into it. The reply to these points was that less building labour particularly skilled craftsmen was needed for the prefabricated temporary house. Two temporary houses could be built by the labour required to build one permanent house of the traditional type. The aluminium house was almost wholly factory built and the manhours required for its erection were only about one tenth of those needed for other types of temporary houses. It also provided for the light alloy industry and gave employment to ex aircraft workers. This and other types brought employment to distressed areas and assisted in the redistribution of industry.

Part of the Bill's attack upon the housing problem was the use of organised direct labour in the shape of flying building squads to supplement the building forces in rural and heavily blitzed areas. This to the Opposition was the Open Sesame to State building by direct labour. Special terms paid to building operatives away from their homes would have the effect of attracting labour into the flying squads they claimed. To stop this draining away the ordinary building industry would have to increase wages and this in turn would put up the price of houses. But assurances came from the Minister of Works that these squads would only be used at the request of the local authorities and could be regarded as strictly confined to emergency use and with this the Opposition were for once satisfied.

On one point however the Opposition would not and could not be satisfied. Amendment after amendment was moved to oblige the Government to draw up a proper commercial balance sheet and profit and loss account of the use to which the Building Materials and Housing Fund was put. This fund was set up in the Bill with an advance from the Treasury of up to £100 000 000 as working capital. The Opposition wanted to know exactly how this money

was spent, down to the last screw.

This brought from Aneurin Bevan an outburst refreshingly reminiscent of his Opposition days. His comedian's eyebrows rose in astonishment at the impudence of the Opposition. He leant menacingly over the despatch box. What had the last Government spent on prefabricated houses? The House had never been told. "Over £2,000,000 wasted on steel houses," he shouted, thumping the box. "Therefore it does not lie in the mouths of the Opposition to talk about commercial probity. They should be silent about it, otherwise some other putrefying corpses will be exhumed." Uproar followed, with harsh cheering from the Government side and cries of "Smokescreen!" from the Opposition. It was a lively interlude in what was otherwise the orderly progress of a necessary Bill to the Statute Book.

The second Bill dealt with a further obstacle to speedy housing. This was the Acquisition of Land Bill to expedite the acquirement of land for housing and other purposes. Mr. Bevan would have liked it earlier, but by now Bills were beginning to jostle one another in the queue and perhaps while he was looking the other way at the National Health Service someone slipped in ahead of him. The existing procedure for the acquisition of land was tedious and expensive, and gave endless opportunities for delay. The new Bill provided two procedures outlined in the first two clauses. Under Clause One a uniform procedure was applied to all purposes for which Government departments had powers of compulsory purchase. This allowed for an inquiry or hearing and Mr. Bevan observed that under it there was the possibility for endless discussion, particularly where local landlords had acquired considerable influence upon the local authority. Sometimes the landlord pushed forward his own considerations as if they were social amenities that were being interfered with.

These delays had two effects. They might interrupt the harmonious flow of materials and components from factory to site secured by the Building Materials and Housing Act,

with the result that storage and distribution centres had to be set up and the cost of houses went up astronomically. Secondly, failure to acquire land quickly had resulted in factories not being put up. For example there were very few sites for factories in the narrow valleys of South Wales. Aneurin Bevan became bitterly eloquent at the plight of his own part of the country. Although we are classed as a first priority, on two occasions we have failed to obtain a factory because the landlord has refused to release sites. It is an area from which the landlord, who is a coal owner, has sucked riches for the last hundred years. It has created millionaires, and now part of it has been rendered derelict. The orange is almost dry. The sites are in possession of the colliery owners but like vultures, they will not desert the carion for fear there might be the slightest bit of nutriment left. The result is that the poor people of the neighbourhood are reduced to impoverishment while they wait for the factory to be established.'

To cope with such situations the Clause Two procedure was introduced. All the local authorities had to do was to serve 14 days' notice on the site, during which those affected could make representations to the Minister. There was no right to an inquiry. The Minister then sent a written authorisation to the acquiring authority which might at any time thereafter within three months take possession. This procedure appalled the Opposition. Derek Walker Smith (C) said that out of 29 local authorities who had no land for housing 25 had taken no steps to acquire land. It was not a lack of power to acquire land in their case but a lack of intention and the Bill would not give such authorities an intention to acquire. Land was not the concern exclusively of men with broad acres and narrow views but of the man with a small house on a small piece of land. That man would be given half or a quarter of the time taken by a Government department to answer a letter in which to consider his notice take advice instruct his lawyers and draft his objections. The Englishman's

home might be his castle but under this Bill it would be a sand castle to be blown hither and thither by the winds that blew from Whitehall. Others said it was a very bad bargain to sacrifice the right of the individual to be heard against the State for a very trivial and illusory gain in speed. If the local authorities were in such a hurry why were they given three months in which to take possession? There was even a suggestion that Mr Bevan was trying a backdoor method of nationalising the land since this speedy procedure gave him all the results of nationalisation without any of the bother and practical difficulties of that operation. Not that national ownership had any terrors either for the Liberals or for the irrepressible half of the Communist representation in the House. Mr Gallacher was disappointed that the Government were not taking over all the land. He would not have left the landlord with sufficient land to provide him with a decent burial.

Lewis Silkin the Minister of Town and Country brought a very level head to allay this turbulent criticism. It was no use providing houses he observed unless you could provide people with opportunities for work and shopping and with the necessary road facilities and land might be urgently required for all these purposes. But it would certainly not be the normal thing to acquire land for these purposes under Clause Two—only in rare cases the most exceptional cases would it be applied. This rather smacked of legislation by assurance to which the Opposition take constant exception but a later addition of a new clause giving power to hold public inquiries under the Clause Two procedure did disperse doubts to some extent and the Bill passed into law with something less than the anticipated furore.

A story was told in the House one day of a slum area which was half cleared. The fortunate half went into a fine new housing estate. Some years later a statistician discovered that the people in the salubrious new estate were dying off at a much faster rate than those in the

squalid overcrowded slum! He also discovered the reason—the rents in the estate were double those in the slum

The moral of this story was very much in Aneurin Bevan's mind as he pondered over the ten a room tenements and jerry built boxes in which so many of his fellow citizens lived. It was up to the Government to produce something better than this—if not 'homes for heroes' at least homes worthy of those heroines who had for so long striven to live and work and make a home under such conditions. But if greater living space, better bathrooms and up to date kitchens were to be provided they must be at rents which the people could afford. Alderman Key, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Health, knew from his long experience of local government of many housewives who had denied themselves food and clothing run into debt and fallen into bad health in the vain hope of retaining for their men and children the better home they deserved before being driven back to the bad old overcrowded conditions from which they had longed to escape.

To avert this common tragedy of aspiration and defeat the Government first set as their standard a three bed roomed house with modern equipment in bathroom, closet and kitchen. Next they assumed a standard rent-less rates—of 10s a week in urban and 7s 6d in rural areas and went on from there. At the existing high cost of building this would mean an annual deficit on such a house of £22 for 60 years—how was the gap to be closed?

The answer was to be found in the Housing (Financial and Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill the last of the housing

Big Three. It contained financial proposals which Mr Key boasted were the most generous the most consistent and the most complete that had ever been placed before the House. The annual deficit was to be divided between national and local funds—between the taxpayer and the ratepayer—on the basis of three to one. There were several upward variations of this subsidy for agricultural cottages for poor districts, for flats and for houses of non traditional

construction. The subsidies were high but they were maxima and it was intended to reduce them at the earliest opportunity. No assistance was being given to the reconditioning and conversion of houses, nor would be until new house building on a sufficient scale was under way. This was to avoid any risk of diverting productive capacity from its main task.

dealing with subsidies for flats came from G McAllister Editor of *Town and Country Planning*. This Clause he claimed went back to principles of city development which had been denounced by every enlightened authority for the last 50 years. The Bill provided for a density of between 130 and 160 people to the acre—a density which was intolerable and a lamentable denial of living space to the ordinary wage earner his wife and family. Did the Minister want to depart from the British tradition of a house and a garden and substitute the proved continental failure of the tenement flat? It seemed so. He would even dump his birth control barracks in the English countryside. The workers of our great cities were to be warehoused whether they liked it or not. Various surveys had shown that anything from 75 per cent to 95 per cent of people preferred a house to a flat. They had no need for the delusions of 'grandeur' which huge scale blocks of flats provided. The Clause was a panic-stricken Clause. It was so much flap-doodle.

To this the Minister gave a detailed reply. He observed that many of our cities were organised not on the basis of the functions of the population as was right and proper but upon some conceptions people formed of what was tasteful what was leisurely and what expressed the success of the individuals who lived in them. That was why there was the suburban sprawl. That was why people lived out in the wilds in urban cottages on the assumption that having a cottage was having a love nest. It very often happened that these cottages resulted in domestic slavery for the women who worked in them. The whole thing was wrongly conceived. We push the sites out on the assumption that people always want to live in a small house and then we have to dig tunnels to reach them when they have got there and to bring them to their work more quickly. We have a complex and diversified society and we must provide complex and diversified amenities. What we are providing is a financial instrument to meet the real needs of the

population, not the academic needs that some people construct out of their own prejudices. I wish some of my honourable friends would not regard their own idiosyncrasies as town planning inspirations.

For all that, Mr Bevan did concede at a later stage that there should be greater freedom to build houses as well as flats on expensive sites and the Bill was therefore amended to allow of more mixed development of such sites.

In his main speech Mr Bevan had a field day against the Opposition. He poured scorn on those who had bemoaned the housing returns and talked longingly of what might have been if the Caretaker Government had continued in office. Every attack made on the Government for lack of finished houses, he said, was actually an attack on the late Government for not having started them. The decision to use the local authorities as the main instrument was no doctrinaire decision. If there was to be any correspondence between the size of the building force on the sites and the actual provision of materials coming forward to the sites from the industries, there had to be planning. If they were to plan, they had to have plannable instruments, and the speculative builder, by his very nature, was not a plannable instrument. In fact he could not tell the House what private enterprise was doing, where they were doing it and how they were doing it. (It may be that in some moment of extreme indiscipline and unparalleled iniquity they would be the sort of people who would sneak off and build some houses—Derek Walker Smith.) In the three years after the 1914-18 war the majority of the houses were built by the local authorities. When reference was made to what private enterprise did between the wars it was what it did 17 years afterwards. Are we to wait 17 years before we get the houses? Apparently I have been able to stimulate private enterprise without a subsidy more than the Tories did with a subsidy. If it is suggested that the Government cannot claim credit for the houses built by speculative builders under licence is it also suggested that

I should make no provision either in manpower or building materials for private enterprise building?

"The Government have accepted the solemn obligation that we should use our building materials and labour first for the production of houses for those who need houses and not for those who can buy them. The Opposition come forward with the old Tory claptrap. The only remedy they have for every social problem is to enable private enterprise to suck at the teats of the State—that we should pour out public money to private enterprise in order to build houses to sell. If I accepted that, the consequences would be inflated housing prices. Housing prices went up 200 per cent between 1919 and 1922 because no controls of any sort were exercised over the industry. I have said that for every four houses built by the local authorities one should be built by private enterprise because four out of every five people in Great Britain need houses to let and cannot afford to buy them."

It was apparent that by the time this last housing Bill was reached Aneurin Bevan was well into his stride. But now the trio was complete and the proof of the pudding would follow. The monthly returns could be left to tell their tale and bear witness to the success or otherwise of the Government's housing policy.

## CHAPTER TEN

### CENSORIOUS INTERLUDE

*The gloomy vulture of nationalisation hovering over our basic industries* — Winston Churchill

*Is it his view that our basic industries are so rotten that they attract the vultures?* — Clement Attlee

In November Herbert Morrison set a trap for the Opposition. He had been complaining that there had been no good rows in Parliament. Certainly it was for no lack of Mr Morrison trailing his coat. It was also rumoured that Conservative voters had been rather disappointed by the showing of their representatives in the House up to that time. This double goad to the Opposition was probably responsible for the promptitude with which they fell into the trap when Mr Morrison came in after questions on November 19 and made a statement on the Government's nationalisation plans. He did so with his most truculent air, and wound up with a warning to the industries under sentence that if they did not press on with all necessary improvements pending legislation their compensation would suffer. Stung by his manner and the gratuitous lectures with which he chose to answer supplementaries the Opposition, led by Oliver Lyttelton, rose to the bait. As the Prime Minister later commented Mr Lyttelton bowled a few wides and was then no-balled by the Speaker for trying to raise matters of legislation on the adjournment.

The Opposition did not let the matter rest there. Although the Government had been barely four months in office a Motion of Censure appeared on the Order Paper couched in the following comprehensive terms: that this House regrets that His Majesty's Government are neglecting their first duty, namely to concentrate with full energy upon the most urgent and essential tasks of reconversion of our industries from wartime production to that of peace. the

provision of houses, the speedy release of men and women from the Forces to industry, and the drastic curtailment of our swollen national expenditure, and deplores the pre-occupation of His Majesty's Ministers, impelled by Socialist theory, with the formulation of long-term schemes for nationalisation creating uncertainty over the whole field of industrial and economic activity, in direct opposition to the best interests of the nation, which demands food, work and homes.

In the two days that were set aside for this Motion interest centred on the front bench speakers, four from the Opposition side and three from the Treasury Bench. The factual charges levelled by the Opposition were that the rate of demobilisation was far too slow, being less than half the comparable rate in the United States, that the consequent shortage of labour retarded and enfeebled production particularly of the goods of which the people had long been in need, that the 'labyrinthine rigmarole and abracadabra of controls' were strangling industry, that the Civil Service were hopelessly over-worked and that administration was suffering through the pre-occupation of the first grade Civil Servants with nationalisation schemes that money was still being poured out on making munitions months after the war was over and, finally, that the Government were putting Party political creed in front of the requirements of the nation.

Sir Stafford Cripps, President of the Board of Trade dissected and dispersed these points with the cool skill of a surgeon. With an air almost of rejoicing in his own reputation for austerity, he defended the regime of self denial in the home market by asking whether it was suggested that nothing from the home trade should go into the export market until the home trade was fully satisfied and that we should cut off our exports at the very moment when we had a better opportunity than ever before in our history of establishing our export trade? In normal times, he was prepared to admit it might be advisable to

look to the home market to absorb overheads in order to secure a competitive price for the foreign market, but that was no longer necessary in the present circumstances with an active sellers' market all over the world. We were exporting 50 per cent of our 1938 volume of goods, yet in all manufacturing there were about five times as many men working for the home market as for export. It was hard to get clothes, he knew, but demobilisation had thrown into the market about 100,000,000 clothing coupons which had not been expected to materialise until the next period.

The Prime Minister also relied on hard facts to rebut criticism. Demobilisation at the rate of 12,000 a day compared very favourably with the rate of 10,000 a day at a comparable period after the last war when the men were only just across on the Continent. It was true that out of the £5,500,000,000 provided for war purposes in the financial year only about £200,000,000 had been saved, but against that had to be set an expenditure on demobilisation for the Army alone of £100,000,000. In addition there was the cost of a very large haul of prisoners, compensation for derequisitioned property and an additional charge of £150,000,000 for food alone as a consequence of the cessation of lend lease. As for production, he quoted figures to show that there had been a steady increase of labour and output in every industry that catered for the ordinary simple people's wants.

These were the hard issues of the debate. The more interesting features were the personal variations on these themes. There was Harold Macmillan (C). Government posts had kept him abroad for many years, he had lost his seat in the General Election and now returned via a by-election at Bromley. He confessed to feeling rather like Rip Van Winkle. "I can hardly believe my eyes" he said. "Everything is so changed. On the benches opposite many colleagues with whom I served in the great Coalition administration sit side by side with their old enemies. What a transformation Attlee and Bevan together!

Bevin and Shinwell side by side ! The lion lying down with the lamb ! " A publisher by profession, Edwardian in appearance but progressive in his views, Harold Macmillan has all the qualities of sincerity, humour and fighting spirit which will always meet with approval in the House irrespective of Party Under the cover of wit, he scored point after point with smooth dexterity. Commenting on the appeals to industry to pull together for the sake of carrying out nationalisation smoothly and successfully, he said "Let us pull together indeed I have no doubt this is the common formula between the hangman and the condemned man " Again, if nationalisation was a universal cure for all human ills, was it not remarkable that the great export industries should be deprived of this precious medicine ? Was it perhaps that the Government hesitated to prejudice or risk the industry and commerce upon which we depended for obtaining foreign currency ? They might think it wiser to confine these experiments to the home market where prices could be raised and the burden thrown upon the taxpayer or the consumer What made these nationalisation schemes all the harder to bear ? Not only that they were ill timed and ill digested, but that they were presented with a kind of cocksure, jaunty, cockney levity singularly ill suited to the present mood of our people His final appeal to the Government was to let sleeping dogmas lie They had a great Parliamentary majority Nearly half the country were behind them They had the tools They might, at least, begin the job

Mr Churchill, in his ripest humour, indulged in personalities His old opponent Aneurin Bevan was the first victim He was accused of shadow boxing against his pet bugbear instead of getting on with housing All his opponents were racketeers, profiteers, monopolists, ring-makers and no doubt in a short time they would also be called Fascist beasts He had threatened the Opposition that if they asked questions he would disclose certain scandals—"putrefying corpses" he called them He should

produce these facts "We cannot have a Minister of Health living among putrefying corpses Unless he changes his policy he will be as great a curse to this country in time of peace as he was a squalid nuisance in time of war"

With Sir Stafford Cripps he was in a more gentle vein, referring to vegetarians as ethereal beings who produced a very great volume of intellectual output with the minimum working costs in fuel But Sir Stafford should dismiss from his mind the idea that it was within the power or thought of any human being in the present organisation of society and with the present nature of man to regulate in detail the entire movement and process by which 48,000,000 people could earn their daily bread "Human beings, happily for themselves, do not have to direct all their bodily functions themselves They do not have to plan in advance how many heartbeats they are to have in the next 24 hours or what relation their temperature or blood pressure should bear to those heartbeats They do not have to decide, as a part of the daily routine, what secretions are to be made by the liver and kidneys No official quota is set for lymph and bile Let the President of the Board of Trade reassure himself We can breathe without him, if he will let us"

There must have been quite a few on both sides of the House who watched the Prime Minister rise to answer Mr Churchill with some feeling of sympathy How could Mr Attlee, so sparing of rhetoric, so little endowed with the demagogic splendours of a great leader, match words with one so much their master? But the Premier had a surprise for the House He revealed himself in a new and almost sprightly mood Where Mr Churchill laid about him with a double headed axe, Mr Attlee thrust swiftly with the lance Mr Churchill, he said, seemed to be complaining that the Government, which had been elected to carry out a Socialist programme, were not carrying out a Conservative programme The outcry about demobilisation was very largely a stunt How could it be otherwise

when in his book, *The Aftermath*, Mr Churchill himself advocated exactly the policy that was being pursued? As for the so-called Socialist fad for austerity, what did the White Paper on Employment Policy—to which Mr Churchill had subscribed as Prime Minister—say? “If there were a scramble to buy while there was still a shortage of goods, prices would rise. This would mean an inflationary boom bringing with it social injustice and economic disturbances.” Nor could Mr Attlee understand the talk about growing uncertainty in industry. If the Opposition were uncertain they had been asleep for a long time. The Labour Party had stood for nationalisation programmes for 40 years and even the Opposition might have realised that if they got a majority they would naturally go in for nationalisation. In fact this was a vote of censure not so much upon the Government but upon the electorate who put them in. ‘It seems to be a terrible shock—quite naturally perhaps for people who remember 1935—that a Government should come in prepared to carry out its own policy. Now we have the wonderful Opposition cry ‘The People versus the Socialists.’ No one who does not belong to the Party which, for the time being, Mr Churchill has selected really belongs to the people. We were all of the people for five years, but I am afraid we are out of it now.’

Between these main speeches the debate proceeded in swirls and eddies as successive speakers charged “the Party opposite with putting Party before country. The profit motive and direction of labour were well trodden paths. How did the Socialist theory that people worked more readily for the State square with the unwillingness of the worker to work shifts for which a large proportion of his earnings were exacted from him by the State? What was the use of adhering to a system of 80 per cent private enterprise and then declaring that the profit motive was a form of moral delinquency? How could the Government plan industry without directing labour? How were they

going to get men into the industries they wanted stepped up and out of those they wanted stepped down—particularly if the wages, as often happened, were higher in the industries from which men would have to be withdrawn?

Herbert Morrison closed the debate and showed his scorn of the Opposition case by declining to answer it further. Instead he surrendered himself to the "party spirit" in both senses of the phrase in precisely that mood of cocksure, jaunty, cockney levity of which Harold Macmillan had complained. No member can better sense the temper of the House than he, or better turn it to his own advantage. No need for pugnacity now, a simple display of unperturbable good humour was enough to draw the Opposition fire, and nothing seemed easier than the affable retort made in an aside to his supporters behind him, as though they, and they alone, were capable of seeing the joke. He could even afford to be generous in his arguments, as when he said that the Conservative Party even believed they had a monopoly to introduce Socialist legislation. Who was it nationalised the telephones? It was the Conservative Party. Who was it nationalised London's water supply? The Conservatives again. Who was it socialised the B.B.C.? It was the Conservative Party and so too they socialised the electricity supply. "But when a Socialist Government come in and want to make their modest contribution to Socialist development they are then faced with a Motion of Censure and told they have no right to do such a thing!"

Before anybody could think too deeply on this revealing statement, the division was called. For the Government 381, against, 197, a good solid vote. Mr. Attlee had said "We don't begrudge the Opposition a couple of days to get together," and in quite a serious sense this was true. It had given each side an excellent opportunity of getting the weight of the other and it can fairly be said that from then onwards both sides were the firmer mounted for the coming battles.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### THE AMERICAN LOAN

*No comparable credit in time of peace has ever been negotiated before —Lord Keynes*

*The loan must be a springboard not a sofa —Winston Churchill*

DURING the Summer Recess negotiations started in Washington of great moment to the financial fortune of Britain. These discussions dragged on laboriously for three months at times hovering critically on the edge of breakdown but in the end agreement was reached and the American loan of £1,100 000 000 was on offer.

There could be no possible doubt that we needed the loan. Lend lease and Mutual Aid had ceased yet the urgent need for supplies from the dollar countries still continued. Meanwhile our national economy had been twisted violently out of shape for the sake of the common war effort. A vast load of debt had been accumulated entirely for war purposes—that strange and ironical reward for all we did and suffered for the common cause. We began the war with a little over £600 000 000 of gold and dollars as against external liabilities of £496 000 000 and finished it with gold and dollar reserves of about £450 000 000 against external debts of £3 500 000 000.

Without the loan grave shortages due to lack of dollars to purchase essential supplies would soon set in. We would have to undergo greater hardships and privation than even during the war. We would have less food of every kind, excluding bread and potatoes less cotton, fewer clothes and only a very small fraction of our supplies of tobacco 80 per cent of which came from dollar sources. Reconversion of industry would be slowed up for lack of raw materials and machinery and capital goods from the United States.

While these arguments advanced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer for the necessity of the loan were so clear as to be a glimpse of the obvious to the House, they were by no means so clear in Washington. On this Lord Keynes, one of the leading negotiators, was quite frank. He explained to the House of Lords that what sounded reasonable in London sounded very different in Washington. In the earlier stages of the negotiation the British took the line that the role we had played in the war and the costs we had incurred before the United States entered the war entitled us to financial aid approximating to a grant to see us through the transition. It was certainly against this background that the loan was negotiated, but the British delegation soon discovered that a primary emphasis on past services and past sacrifices would not be fruitful. The American view was that it was more practical and more realistic to think in terms of the future and to work out what credits, of what amount and upon what terms, would do most service in reconstructing the post war world and guiding the post war economy along those lines which would best conduce to the general prosperity of all and to the friendship of nations. Men's sympathies and less calculated impulses were drawn from memories of comradeship, but their contemporary acts were generally directed towards influencing the future and not towards pensioning the past.

Lord Keynes regretted that it was not an interest-free loan but after all no interest was to be paid for six years and no interest would fall due under a 'waiver clause' in any year in which our exports had not been restored in volume to a level which might be estimated at about 60 per cent excess of what they were pre war. Taking this into account, it was an act of unprecedented liberality. Had any country ever treated another country like this in times of peace for the purpose of rebuilding the other's strength and restoring its competitive position?

One condition of the loan was the acceptance of the

Bretton Woods agreements These embodied the longterm organisation of world commerce and foreign exchange on a multilateral and non discriminatory basis To bring Britain into line with this longterm policy it would be necessary to bring the sterling area into conformity with it and without a plentiful supply of dollars any reconversion of the sterling area in time to enable Britain to collaborate effectively with the United States in pursuing that policy would be impracticable This was the reason for the acceptance of the Bretton Woods agreements being tied in with the loan

Mr Dalton further explained that the Bretton Woods agreements established an International Monetary Fund and an International Bank for Reconstruction and Development The purpose of the Fund was to assist in stabilising rates of foreign exchange In pre-war years the British export trade suffered grievous damage from unregulated anarchical competitive depreciation of foreign currencies We were constantly being knocked right and left without warning and without good reason in this way We should go into Bretton Woods with the existing rate of 4 03 dollars to the pound This was not a return to the gold standard or anything like it If any variations were necessary there were successive avenues open to us to alter the value of our currency Any member of the Fund merely by notifying the Fund could vary the par value of its currency by 10 per cent up or down Two further variations were possible after that and there was the final right of any member to resign from the Fund without penalty

Such were the main features of the loan and the Bretton Woods agreements But there were some conditions which tempted members to examine the teeth of this gift horse rather wryly One in particular limited the freedom of Britain to maintain exchange controls on current transactions to one year from the operation of the loan The disadvantages of this were plainly put by Oliver Lyttelton He supposed that a year after the loan operated we were

to buy a million pounds' worth of jute from India and India either could not or would not buy goods to that value from us. We would then be obliged to pay in dollars so that India could buy American machinery or textiles. The same might happen all over the sterling area, because America had already converted her industries to a peace-time basis and would be able to deliver the goods more quickly.

Conservative criticism was mainly in respect of Imperial preference, which no reassurances from the Government would convince them was not threatened. But the strength of their arguments was vitiated by a decision to abstain from voting on the grounds that although the need for the loan was recognised they could not "welcome" the stipulations attached to it. Like all who sit on the fence, they were an easy target for supporters of the loan, but they escaped undue attention owing to the pre-occupation of each Party with its own rebels. Only the dozen Liberals were solidly in favour of it.

Among those who led a roaring crusade against the loan was Robert Boothby (C), a passionate prophet of doom. "Comparable terms have never hitherto been imposed on a country that has not been defeated in war," he alleged. "To anchor ourselves to gold at 403 dollars to the pound at this time is absolute insanity. Of the 28 billion dollars of monetary gold in the world 23 billion are in America. The principle of non-discrimination in trade will involve the elimination of quotas on imports and of Imperial preference and the break up of the British Empire. This is our economic Munich. There was a mandate this Government never got from the people of this country and that was to sell the British Empire for a packet of cigarettes."

So heartfelt an attack drew from Oliver Stanley (C) the reflection that when Mr Boothby died he would have "Bretton Woods" engraved upon his heart, adding thoughtfully, as he surveyed Mr Boothby's portly figure, "It is rather longer than 'Calais'." On the other hand the honour-

able member presents rather a wider frontage than Queen Mary."

On the other side the chief rebel was Norman Smith, who had already inveighed against Bretton Woods as long ago as August. In his view the Government would find themselves compelled to abdicate financial control in favour of an alien authority not resident in this country and not answerable to anybody. He protested that he had not come into Parliament to play a game of political football in which the referee was across the ocean. Unless America would accept a surplus of goods from this country we would inevitably default on the loan. The action Parliament was taking was the beginning of the British war of independence against American capitalism during the post war period.

With all this fire and fury, very few members could meet the Government challenge to produce an alternative. The main suggestion was that we could rely on a sterling bloc based on the British Empire. This suggestion was countered by past figures showing that in 1938 our imports from the sterling group were 33 per cent of our total imports and, taking in the European countries as well, the figure was only 51 per cent. From "the other place" Lord Keynes described such an economic bloc as consisting of countries to which we already owed more than we could pay agreeing to lend us money they had not got and to buy only from us and one another goods we were not able to supply.

The debate closed with attempts from both front benches to reconcile the dissidents. Mr Churchill, unshaken in his conviction that a Conservative Government could have got better terms, admitted that if we did not receive the loan there would be a rough and tumble struggle in the economic sphere between the United States and the British Commonwealth and the sterling area. He was sure that in such a case we should get the worst of it. The terms might be severe but we had to think of our other creditors. We owed £1,200,000,000 sterling to the Government of

India and £400,000,000 to the Government of Egypt. No proposal had come from them similar to the great measure of lend lease—the most unsordid act in the history of nations. Everything had been charged against us without the slightest recognition of the common cause.

Ernest Bevin was the last speaker in a debate which had included the high proportion of seven front bench speakers in two days. He roundly denounced the Tory contention that they could have got better terms as a libel on the United States. To the malcontents he said he had never known anybody feel comfortable as he left the money-lender and calculated the repayment—particularly if he had been a moneylender himself for a long time. He could not understand Mr Boothby's claim that we should be anchored to gold. 'If I had a ship in narrow waters and there was a ten per cent play from the anchor and then another ten per cent and then free play, I would not feel my ship was very safe.'

On the division the Lobbies presented a curious spectacle. Die-hard Tories and doctrinaire Socialists mingled brazenly with the "Noes". Not so brazen were the seven Tories who lost themselves among the Government supporters in the "Ayes" Lobby. The result was never in doubt, however, and the loan, together with its 'strings' was approved by a majority of 247. Of the 98 who voted against the Government 23 were Socialists and 69 Conservatives.

## CHAPTER TWELVE

### FREEDOM FROM WANT

*This is the best and cheapest insurance policy ever offered to the British people, or to any people anywhere*  
—James Griffiths

NOTHING that happened on the home front during the period of the Coalition Government had fired the public imagination more than the Beveridge Report on Social Insurance. After a barrage of debates and White Papers legislation got under way before the end of the war and by the time the Labour Government arrived on the scene the foundations were already laid. The Ministry of National Insurance had been set up and the Family Allowance Act was on the Statute Book.

The Government lost no time in completing the main structure and October found the House busy with the National Insurance (Industrial Injuries) Bill which was to make compensation for industrial injuries a part of the country's social services on the basis of fixed benefits for a fixed premium. Like all else connected with the scheme it was comprehensive, embracing all persons under any contract of service or apprenticeship without any income limit, the managing director paying his 4d a week and receiving his basic rate of benefit of 45s and appropriate allowances along with the farm worker, the factory hand and the dustman.

Enthusiasm coursed through the speech of the Minister of National Insurance, James Griffiths, as he outlined the scheme, but it was not until he came to the more positive side of the Bill that his warm hearted Welsh temperament really evinced itself. This was the diversion of money from the Industrial Injuries Fund for the work of research into the causes and prevention of industrial injury and particularly of industrial diseases. Here the Bill fitted into the

Disabled Persons (Employment) Act to train injured men for employment and also the Distribution of Industry Act which by setting up alternative light industries in single industry areas would provide a likely field of employment for such men after training. The Fund would also enable the Minister to provide artificial limbs and other appliances, either free, or at reduced costs. I still have boyhood memories of buying a 3d raffle ticket to provide a peg leg for a miner," he said, and for a moment he paused, as though even then, his 17 years in the pits were passing before his eyes.

Osbert Peake for the Opposition was scarcely less enthusiastic. No other country in the world, he declared had a scheme which involved joint contributions equal representation of workmen and employers at all stages of administration, and assessment of compensation in relation, not to loss of earnings but to the injury sustained. It was a scheme born in a new atmosphere of free and equal partnership between employer and workman.

Not all members took such a rosy view. Socialists complained that the benefits were too low and that the employers were getting away with millions of pounds which they had had to pay in workmen's compensation under existing law. Haydn Davies (Lab) thought that the Bill removed the greatest single incentive to the provision of adequate safety in industry—which was the fact that the employer was liable to pay compensation in the case of accident. The most robust criticism came from Mr Hale (Lab) who called the Bill a child born of mixed political parentage conceived in a time of strain and stress and prematurely delivered to the House. We promised to give the workers additional social insurance, he said.

We are not giving it to them but selling it to them at a fairly high price. He received support from others who thought that the burden should be laid wholly on the Exchequer. Swarthy Mr Lindgren the Parliamentary Secretary was obliged to repeat on several occasions that

increased benefits could be given only if there was an increased contribution. After it had been working for some time there might be a balance which would enable either benefits to be increased or contributions to be lowered. But later when he was going into the finances of the scheme he confessed that it would not reach maturity for 10 or even 20 years and that any excess of income over expenditure in the intervening years would have to be held in reserve to meet the rising cost of benefits.

A plea from the Opposition for the self employed, the small shopkeeper or the village blacksmith was turned aside with the answer that they would receive sickness benefit under the main scheme but they were more successful in pleading the cause of the better paid workers. For their benefit Mr Griffiths introduced a new clause giving him power to approve supplementary schemes. Labour arguments also influenced him to adjust his scales for youths in industry and the partially disabled who otherwise would have received less under the Bill than under existing law. But he got into real trouble over the stipulation that there should be three waiting days before the injury benefit was paid—even when the day of the accident was counted as the first day. This stipulation was voted out of the Bill in Committee when the Government were defeated for the first time in the Session—and by their own supporters. Some bargaining took place and the provision was reinserted. But a concession was granted. Originally payment was to be made from the first day if incapacity lasted for 24 days or more. This period was now halved and all were satisfied. It cost the Government £300 000 a year but the administrative costs of dealing with minor injuries of a day or two's duration would have been very much more.

The administration of the scheme was fairly simple. Claims were dealt with in the first instance by insurance officers. Independent local appeal tribunals consisting of one representative each of the employers and workers under an independent chairman normally a lawyer would

decide appeals from the insurance officer's decision and there would be a right to a final appeal to a commissioner appointed by the Crown. The Conservative view of the system was that the dice were loaded on the side of the official and against the individual. "The disappointment of a disappointed litigant is nothing to the baffled frustration of a man who tries to get his way with a Government department and cannot," said Harold Davies, and Mr. Manningham-Buller enquired innocently whether the tribunal would be quite so impartial when there was a non-unionist applicant and a trade unionist workman or the tribunal. From these objections sprang a demand from both sides for the right of appeal to the county court without cost. "Why deny to the workers these palladiums of our liberties in the courts, which have been the pride of our constitution?" asked one Socialist. "Keep the lawyers out!" cried little George Griffiths, a well-loved member, who died in the Christmas Recess.

The fear of the "quibbles and paraphernalia of the law" could be well understood in the case of workmen's compensation. There was, for instance, the phrase "arising out of and in course of employment" upon which thousands of cases had turned and behind which was now piled a mass of case law. This phrase had been reluctantly included in the Bill by Mr. Griffiths who said apologetically "I am convinced it is better to stick to the devil we know than fly to devils we know nothing of." Dr. Stephen Taylor (Lab.) had a simple remedy. If sickness benefits under National Insurance were raised to the level of injury benefits, all the difficulties of interpreting the phrase would be swept away. But Mr. Griffiths was afraid that a system of unified benefits would not come until the contributory scheme had been supplanted entirely by provision from State funds.

The lawyers may have been kept out of the Bill, but 17 of them had their sling in Committee. There was the case of the workman injured on his way to work. If he was

injured on a vehicle provided by his employer he was covered. But a newsboy cycling to pick up his newspapers was not covered. A bicycle was not a vehicle nor could he be said to be a passenger on it. "You have got to draw the line somewhere," said the Solicitor General. "But if his employer sent him an urgent message to collect the papers?" "That would be different. He would be acting under direct instructions from his employer and would be covered." And there, bewildered by the strange idiosyncrasies of their own progeny, the legislators had to leave it.

The days and months went by and gradually the Bill freed itself from successive legal tangles to be presented for Royal Assent some ten months later. The whole of workmen's compensation henceforward is out of the hands of the employers and the insurance companies and out of industrial strife—good value for 4d.

Meanwhile the draftsmen had been working on the main measure, the National Insurance Bill, and by labouring through the Christmas Recess, they had it ready for discussion early in the New Year. The main difference between the Bill and the proposals with which the House and the country were fully familiar was an adjustment of the rates of benefit to the cost of living. These new rates were 42s for a couple living together, 26s for a single person, for unemployment, sickness, widows' pensions and "retirement pensions" as the old age pensions were now called. Sickness benefit was to continue for as long as the incapacity, but unemployment benefit was to be limited to 30 weeks, after which application could be made to a local tribunal for extended benefit. Maternity benefits were a grant of £4 an attendance allowance of £1 a week for four weeks and, for an employed woman, 36s a week for 13 weeks.

Contributions including the 4d for industrial injury and 10d for the National Health Service, were 4s 11d for employed persons and 5s 9d for self employed. The power of the Assistance Board or of the Public Assistance

Authorities to make supplementary awards remained, for the time being, untouched, but the whole position would be cleared up in a final Bill to be introduced later.

Provision was also made for supplementary schemes and for a review of the rates every five years to see how they stood in relation to the cost of living. A most interesting feature was the power to vary the rates of contribution up or down, with the object of adjusting the purchasing power in the pockets of the masses. This was in accordance with the policy of full employment. In good times when there was plenty of money available to absorb production, the rates might be increased, but when there was a danger of supply exceeding demand and of having to slow down the wheels of production—perhaps by "laying off" workers—then was the time to lower the rates and release money to buy goods. Richard Law (C) observed that it was easy to know when times were bad, but it was by no means so easy to recognise when times were good. In other words, it would be easy to lower contributions, but very difficult to raise them. Human nature being what it is.

The paramount question in considering such a scheme as this must always be "Can we afford it?" That had been the question since the Beveridge Report first appeared and it remained so throughout the debates on these Bills. The cost in this case was likely to rise steeply for many years ahead and one factor which would contribute very largely to this was the trend of the population. In 1948 one in eight of the people over 16 would be over 65 and by 1978 the proportion would have risen to one in five. It was this thought that lay behind the Conservative claim that the old people were getting a much better deal under the Bill than the young people who would have to support them in years to come. The cost of this social advance had to be met by increased production, said Sir Peter Bennett (C), and there would in future be not more people to do it but less. He assured members there was no mystery about finance. "The mystery is how to get it," thought Mr

Messer (Lab), but even that was no mystery to Mr Paton (Lab) who argued that the national income had been increasing by about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  per cent a year over a long period of years and there was no reason to suppose that this process would cease. Supposing it dropped to one per cent the national income would still have risen by about £2,000,000,000 in 30 years. Nobody need therefore worry about the cost!

The Government were confident that the cost was one the country could carry. Supposing we cannot afford it. What does that mean? asked the Prime Minister. 'It really means that the sum total of goods produced and services rendered by the people of this country is not sufficient to provide for all our people at all times the very modest standards of life represented in this Bill. I cannot believe that our national productivity is so low, or that our willingness to work is so feeble that we must submit to the world that the masses of our people must be condemned to penury.'

Though there were these misgivings about cost and some expressions of the contrary opinion that the benefits were inadequate that there was too much Beveridge and too little Socialism in the Bill, members as a whole were conscious that they were legislating to a great and common purpose. It was only when the 199 clauses came to be considered in detail that conflict arose. The main issue was one that is likely to haunt 199 Labour members for many years to come. These were the 199 members who had pledged their support to the friendly societies if they wished to come into the social insurance scheme. It had soon been made clear to James Griffiths that they did want to come in and he, with his customary patience and care, had devoted much thought to the question. In the end he declared. The scheme is unified at the centre—a single Minister, a single fund and a single contribution. No scheme has been put before me for harnessing the friendly societies to the administration which did not carry with

it a great deal of overlapping machinery I therefore came to the conclusion that the State, having put its hand to the plough, must complete the job "

For a good deal of the Second Reading debate, for two whole days in Committee and for nearly two days on Report, this question agitated the House "Forget your prejudices and remember your pledges," the unfortunate 199 were exhorted by the Opposition "If you don't they will be the not-so friendly societies" Most unhappy of all was Mr Lindgren, the Junior Minister At the end of the second day he was pressed by Mr. Marlowe (C) to say whether he had not put his signature to a document pledging support to the friendly societies Considerably embarrassed, Mr Lindgren stammered "I really can't say" Whereupon Mr Marlowe produced the offending document and asked whether the signature it bore was his, to which in all honesty the blushing Minister had to reply—"Yes, I think it is" This dramatic little scene was interrupted by the adjournment, but the battle between conscience and duty was relentless and prolonged, the more so because the case on both sides was good.

The friendly societies were powerfully defended by Mr. Goodrich (Lab), a friendly society official, in the Commons, and by Lord Beveridge himself in the Lords Mr Goodrich argued that if the Government persisted in keeping the societies out there would be duplication of sickness benefit The wife would have to provide two medical certificates, she would have to be seen by two visitors and would be paid by two different persons It would not be the Government scheme that would suffer as a result of the inconvenience of this dual system, because that would be compulsory The friendly societies would be pushed to the wall Yet 8,000,000 persons, one-third of the insured people the Minister would be catering for, were members of friendly societies

Hopefully, members appealed to the humanity of the Minister Here was an intimate friendly service in the home,

built up over many years, surely far superior to the cold impersonal administration of the State. On the argument that the Minister wanted an unified system there was a two-fold attack. In the first place, he could not dismiss the societies because they only administered sickness benefit. Under his own scheme the unemployment benefit would go through the employment exchanges, pensions through the Post Office and sickness benefit through the regional offices. He was, in any case proposing to use the friendly societies to administer sickness benefits during the transitional period, so why not see if they could not be permanently adapted to the needs of the scheme?

The harassed Minister received support from Tudor Watkins (Lab) who turned the picture round and described the rules of some of the societies. If a member drawing benefit, for instance was out later than 8 p.m. he was fined. Members had even been fined for attending chapel. Nor were the benefits inevitably generous. In 1942 on St David's Day 180 000 cases were referred to relief because approved and friendly societies were not paying sufficient benefit. Others cautioned the Minister not to give way. If he did, he would find it hard to resist the case for letting in the industrial insurance companies too.

Haggard and heavy eyed after many gruelling days in Committee on both this and the Industrial Injuries Bill—and no Minister could be more constant in his attendance upon the passage of his Bills—James Griffiths plunged into the battle. He had signed no pledge and like most experienced politicians he had no time for questionnaires. In his view they reflected pressure politics of a kind that would destroy democracy in the end. As he rose to speak he knew that the Government were nearer defeat than at any previous time. The Opposition were against him, the Liberals small in numbers but a useful indication of the way the wind was blowing were against him and there were the 199 Labour members who had signed the pledge. It was a strong challenge and he rose to it with all the tense

passion and eloquence of his Celtic temperament. Many of the arguments he had met already and this time he went back to first principles. Conditions had been laid down in the Beveridge scheme that no society should be admitted unless it was non profit making—that cut out the bulk of the approved societies and unless it paid substantial sickness benefits out of its own funds—that would exclude practically all the small friendly societies and they were the only ones who had that much praised human touch. All that would be left would be the big centralized societies which were as remote as any Government machine sometimes even more remote and their membership was nothing like 8 000 000.

The crowded House listened to this and other arguments with close attention and the cheers at the end of the speech marked a personal triumph for a popular Minister. Where there is not much to choose between the arguments on either side much depends on the character of the Minister and on that score the Welshman was secure in sympathy. The danger to the Government evaporated in the Lobbies and of the 199 only 12 including the two tellers stuck to their pledge a victory in some cases of duty, and in others of conviction over conscience.

Small in stature but tremendous in argument Sidney Silverman led the other Labour rebellion a family quarrel in which the Opposition took no part. He protested that after 180 days of unemployment an unemployed person had no rights at all. He fell outside the scheme and was thrown back on to a tribunal which had to have regard to his particular circumstances. This said Mr Silverman, if it meant anything at all meant a means test. "We are back quite literally on the dole."

Treasury, but they could not understand why the Minister should make so much of the charge on the Fund if unemployment benefit were to be unlimited in time. If he was afraid that it would break the Fund, as he appeared to be, contended Barbara Castle (Lab.), that meant that he was afraid of mass unemployment. In that case the unemployed man would be the victim of a breakdown of State policy and it was not right that the onus of proving that he was entitled to benefit should be thrust upon him.

Here was an issue which, with the driving force of Sidney Silverman's unequivocal logic behind it, struck deep into the Socialist conscience. The rebels were gaining ground and the Opposition were making no mistakes. If one of their number had uttered a word in favour of the rebels, the Government could have breathed again. But no. Most unhelpfully the Opposition had even declared their intention of abstaining. In this domestic crisis it was inevitable that the hero of many a Labour Conference should lend a hand and no one was very surprised when Herbert Morrison appeared to save the situation. With his characteristic blend of the disarming and the dictatorial, he set about restoring discipline with zest. It was impossible, he said, to base any insurance scheme on limited contributions and unlimited benefits. Therefore the Government had decided that unemployment benefit should go on for a stated period within the finances of the insurance scheme. Thereafter the workman should have the right to go to a tribunal for his case to be reviewed and for a decision to be reached whether he should draw extended benefit from the Exchequer. "I cannot believe," he scolded, "that any Socialist would affirm the doctrine that any citizen has the unconditional right to draw money from the State without question, query or justification."

For all Mr. Morrison's efforts 30 Labour members were so unchastened as to vote against their Government, though it would be fairer to say that it was a vote, not against the Government, but against the past, which

contained the degradation of the dole and the means test

The remainder of the proceedings on the Bill was largely a matter of concession and congratulation. The self-employed person was placed on the same footing for sickness benefit as the employed, and his contribution raised to 6s 2d. This alarmed members. What about the rural craftsmen? they asked. Could hedgers, ditchers, mole catchers and farriers afford 6s 2d? Well, there you are,' replied Mr Griffiths. 'You all press me to do this and now you realise the difficulties.' It was also made clear that maternity grants would be made for each child in the case of twins or triplets. 'Is there no limit to the size of the litter?' enquired Mr Butler. 'I am not quite sure whether it is the sky or the stork that is the limit,' replied Mr Lindgren.

Thus pleasantly the Bill found its way into the calm waters of the Third Reading. Only one voice was raised against it. Sir Waldron Smithers (C) was unshakably convinced that the country could not afford it, that it was part of the 'Rake's progress' of the Government and of the Socialist policy of mass bribery. His remarks strayed further and further away from the Bill until his declaration 'The soap-box has triumphed! brought from the Deputy Speaker the reproof 'I can't find anything in the Bill about soap-boxes.'

Save for that one dissenting voice and two other members who took their courage and convictions in both hands and stood up before the House to show their disapproval on Second Reading the Bill finally left the chamber with unanimous accord. It was a grand piece of legislation and no one who recalled the words of James Griffiths on Second Reading could doubt the wisdom of Mr Attlee's choice of the man to administer it. "All the time I have been working out these details the Minister had said 'I have tried to remember that behind the contributions the benefits, the rates, behind them all are human beings men and women with their hopes and dreams their fears and their

disappointments. For a generation I have lived with the consequences of insecurity but to those who profess to fear that security will weaken the moral fibre and destroy self respect let me say this. It is not security that destroys but insecurity. It is the fear of to-morrow that paralyses the will, it is the frustration of human hopes that corrodes the soul. Security in adversity will I believe release our people from the haunting fears of yesterday and make to-morrow not a day to dread but a day to welcome. It will release their gifts and energies for the service of the nation.

This Bill represents an act of faith of trust in the British people. I ask the House to accept it in the sure confidence that our people are worthy of our trust.

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

# THE MARCH OF NATIONALISATION

*The miner pays a very high price for the right to work  
He pays in terms of disease and disability and death —George  
Dagger*

*This is not nationalisation it is State capitalism —  
Harold Macmillan*

It was one of the phenomena of the 1945-6 Session that the sturtest battles were seldom fought on the expected occasions. This may be said to reflect a right and proper sensitiveness of Parliament to public opinion, and public opinion is more apt to be moved by the impact of immediate circumstances than by past grievances or future benefits. Most of the major Bills of the Session did not bring instant benefit. Like ships after launching they still required months of work and preparation before they could operate. Thus although politically the most significant parts of the Government's programme were the nationalisation proposals when the Bills came forward to implement them

a remedy. The battle, so far as the Opposition was concerned, had already been fought and lost. The Mining Association, representing the majority of the mine-owners, had surrendered to the Government and left the Opposition high and dry. A rearguard action was all that was open to them.

In these circumstances the Minister of Fuel and Power did not spend very long in justifying his Bill. The mordant and brilliant debater of old did not appear, there was too serious a matter on hand. Here was an industry upon which the industrial strength and prosperity of the country was based and yet the existing position contained the elements of industrial disaster. Output had fallen steadily over the years and the labour force had dwindled. The vast majority of the pits were unworthy of a great industrial nation. Relations between owners and men generally speaking, were soured and embittered and the efficiency of the industry relative to that of our Continental and other competitors was 'distinctly backward.' The whole industry needed reorganising from top to bottom at a cost which private enterprise was neither able nor ready to meet.

More truculent was his Parliamentary Secretary, William Foster, who resigned during the course of the Bill. He pointed to the wastage in the industry—75 000 a year, and the intake was not half that number. "Nobody wants to work in the mines," he said. "What a monument to private enterprise! Poverty and unemployment have been the recruiting sergeants and have been used to batter down the standards of life of the miner. The history of the mining industry is as black as the coal itself."

"It is a terrible indictment of the system under which we have lived" added another miners representative. "It is saturated with the blood, sweat and toil of the miners and imprinted on it are the drawn and pinched faces of women of past generations."

Bitterness alternated with exultation in the breasts of these members many of them with long years of coal

getting in the pits behind them Mr Shinwell spoke for them when he attacked an industrial system which has nothing to commend it but its age They roared their approval when he said I do not doubt that the disciples of private enterprise in this House who regard industry as a legitimate field for the marauding profit seeker would prefer the skull and crossbones method of running the coal industry This is not and never has been our conception And they rejoiced when one of their number whose father and four brothers were in the pits denounced the Tory Party as these poor nebulous minded troglodytes and Rip Van Winkles So vicious so concentrated and channelised has their ideology on profits privilege and power become that they cannot appreciate the fact that their world is dyin"—and if the future is to live die it must

The Opposition in the main made no attempt to return such fire It was a field on which they had already been beaten Very wisely they concentrated on Mr Shinwell's scheme It followed the anticipated formula A National Coal Board was to be set up by the Minister composed of experts on a full time basis They were to take over and run not only the mines but their associated assets such as the colliery coke ovens for the treatment of coal and coal products Mr Shinwell thought it would be short sighted and very foolish to leave these profitable assets in private hands Compensation would be paid in Government stock and advances up to £150 000 000 for the first five years would be made to the Board for capital expenses and working capital To keep the Board up to the mark Domestic and Industrial Consumers Councils would be established to advise the Minister on matters affecting the sale and supply of coal The Minister himself was empowered to give the Board directions of a general character when the national interest was involved

The main structure of the Bill was attacked along two lines Some thought it gave the Chancellor of the Exchequer the final say in the industry Major Lloyd George (L.)

the former Minister, was one of these Chancellors were always short of money, he argued, and there was a danger of nationalised industries merely serving to make a profit for the Exchequer. If anyone doubted it, let him consider the £12,000,000 a year which the Chancellor used to exact from the Post Office before the war. Could not the Post Office have maintained better conditions and given better services if they had been allowed to keep that money? Under the Bill no money could be utilised except with the approval of the Treasury. In times of stress that might lead to urgent developments in the industry being held up. But the general opinion was that the Minister of Fuel and Power would become the complete dictator of the mining industry. This point was wittily put by Harold Macmillan (C). "The Minister may direct, he may make Regulations," he said. "All this is common form nowadays. Indeed, if Moses had only known this technique, he would never have committed himself to anything so precise and occasionally inconvenient as the Ten Commandments. When he came down from Mount Sinai he could have taken powers to make Regulations."

Three Government spokesmen had their answer to this point. The Chancellor of the Exchequer himself said that the Minister only could issue general directions. For instance, the Board could take it upon itself to close one pit, but if there was a question of closing several the Minister would have to make the decision. Again, it would clearly be a matter for the Minister, as representing the Government to decide on the total amount of coal to be exported. Hugh Gaitskell who succeeded Mr Foster as Parliamentary Secretary in mid stream as it were—and succeeded brilliantly—argued that the Minister could not forgo control of capital expenditure if it was to be brought into line with the Government's employment policy. Mr Shunwell, too, modestly disclaimed any intention to dictate to the Board. It would be an industrial corporation untrammelled and unfettered as far as possible, and with

complete freedom to pursue its own line in the ordinary transactions for which it was responsible. There would also be decentralisation. It would obviously be physically impossible to administer the whole of the pits from London or any other single centre. There would be groups of pits responsible to regional organisations, which, in turn, would be responsible in terms of policy, but not of day to-day administration, to the Board.

This decentralised organisation was also the Government reply to the Conservative alternative of compulsory amalgamations. Herbert Morrison, always on the spot when a storm is expected, asked how complete reorganisation could be carried out if the work had suddenly to stop because it had come up against a mine belonging to somebody else. "You must have physical freedom of action," he said. "You must have managerial and technical elbow room." Again, there was the financial aspect. Would the private capitalist put millions in mining? "I think not. The money would have to be got from the State or be State guaranteed. Private enterprise begins to feel that it cannot be enterprise without the State behind it. If the State is going to be behind it, then let the State own the shop."

On points of detail the Opposition were more successful. For 18 days in Committee and for three days on Report stage they fought hard for various amendments and many were ultimately conceded in the Lords. Throughout the long discussion of some 400 amendments Mr Shinwell displayed what Harold Macmillan called his Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde characteristics, moving rapidly from gay and witty chaff to quite bitter and often rancorous attack, from suave and conciliatory charm to violent paroxysms of emotion. No doubt he was assisted in these transformations by the subtle proddings of Captain Crookshank and Mr Macmillan a most accomplished pair of Bill baiters. But for all his refusal to be 'squeamish or mealy-mouthed' or to be disturbed by 'the infantile pedantries' of one

member or by another "smirking away in his characteristic fashion" Mr Shinwell showed himself most amenable to suggestions which might improve his Bill from whatever quarter they came

For instance J S C Reid (C) had uncovered three forms of hidden subsidy in the Bill, by differential prices for selling coal and putting an indirect tax on those thought able to pay by subsidising mining from the more profitable ancillary activities, and by the Minister directing in any one year that less should be paid into the Treasury than should be paid if the taxpayer was to be protected against loss. All these points were met. The power of the Board to discriminate in prices between one customer and another was dropped. Separate accounts were to be published annually for both the mining and the ancillary activities, and finally any directions given by the Minister to the Board were to be published in their annual report. Mr Shinwell had said that all this would have been done in any case but Mr Macmillan thought it was better to have a statutory bird in the hand than many promises in the bush. There had also been strong pressure for the utmost ventilation of consumers complaints, and at last Mr Shinwell relented there too and inserted provisions for regional consumers councils as well as for the publication of the councils annual reports to the Minister. Now they are standing in white sheets let us at least give them credit for their drapery said the irrepressible Mr Macmillan.

For all this conciliatory attitude the Opposition could not let the Government carry off their Bill without some solid attempt to put them out of countenance. This they did by the simple process of asking awkward questions. It was a Bill said Anthony Eden to set up a State monopoly for the production of coal and nothing else. Would the evils of monopoly disappear once it came under the aegis of the State? Was this the nationalisation the miners wanted—or thought they wanted? The old cry The mines for the miners had no place in this Bill. The same men

would be managing the mines as before, observed others. Where else could the Minister get them? The miner would go to the same pit and get the same lamp from the same man, said Major Lloyd George. He would go into the same cage, be lowered by the same man—and would see the same expression on the face of the pony! Would it make all the difference if the boss was different? One of the complaints under private enterprise was that the boss was so remote. But this one would be even more remote. The boss would be a Board composed of nine men—"nine bright shiners" Harold Macmillan called them. They would not be elected by the mining community. The miner would have only one source of employment and he could not change his employer. Surely from the miner's point of view this could not be called a "good swap."

The Opposition were not even sure that the miner really needed disenchantment on this score. What about the output lately? they asked. Did it look as if the magic of nationalisation was having the desired effect? Mr Shinwell looked pensive. In his ironical way, he may have been thinking that difficult as it was to get coal out of the pit, he was getting plenty of coals of fire from the benches opposite. Here was Peter Thorneycroft declaring that in no circumstances would the public maintain miners' wages—and they certainly would not increase them—on a basis of declining production and increasing costs. If wages were to be maintained, the miners should be prepared to increase output per manshift. And to make things more awkward here was Jennie Lee (Lab) asking "Has the honourable member not realised that the miners have the whip hand?"

Now the Opposition were in full cry. The very idea of Parliament bowing its head to any section of the community! Yet Mr Shinwell would obviously be helpless against political pressure from his own backbenchers. Perhaps the Board might refuse a demand for increased wages, instanced Major Lloyd-George. Such a decision could be overridden by the Minister. How could he with-

stand the pressure put upon him by the powerful representation of the mining industry in the House? The more industries that were nationalised the more political pressure of this sort there would be. There was a danger of getting a collection of delegates in the House. Will not Parliament become the forum of wage disputes between rival pressure groups? asked Harold Macmillan. The Minister has told us to look for the ultimate protection of the consumer in the House of Commons. Yes—but who will protect the House of Commons?

Disillusion and dilemma were also the keynotes of a contribution by David Eccles (C) who thought that the majority of those who voted Socialist at the General Election had been encouraged to do so not to give something to the community but to get something out of the community. For years and years the Socialist rank and file had been taught to regard the State as a miserly old villain who would disgorge his wealth only when he was made their prisoner. He added blandly. There is a certain animosity for the State bred in our bones. It is folly to found an economic policy on a change in human nature for which no warrant exists in experience and that is what Socialists do. Apart from a handful of idealists whose devotion I admire ordinary British men and women will not worship at the altar of the State or tumble over each other to serve unselfishly a monopoly of political creation. Rather they will try to extract from the monopoly a whole series of benefits and advantages which a weakening loyalty and a loosening discipline will make them think are theirs by right. What will the Minister do then? He can make the public pay. He can resort to high prices for coal or to subsidies from the taxpayer. Or he will be forced to impose controls and directions over labour that will make the Essential Work Order look like freedom. There is no third way to bolster up an inefficient monopoly. Either he must rob the consumer or conscript the worker.

These insidious shafts might perhaps have prompted

Herbert Morrison in his appeal to miners and managements to emancipate themselves from the understandable inhibitions created by the past and the mentality thrust upon them by a crude capitalism. But they obviously had no effect on Emanuel Shinwell. He was too adept at that sort of thing himself. They were mere hypothetical arguments to which he had already given an answer when he said, "Much remains to be done on a five-day week, longer holidays and improvements in labour standards. We cannot impose increased charges on coal consumers, but in the measure that costs can be reduced, either through reorganisation or increased output, it is hoped that long awaited reforms in this most arduous of all industries can be applied." Since then, so little had he to answer that he had been amusing himself collecting the epithets hurled at the Bill. It was a frivolous piece of publicity, very flimsy, objectionable authoritarian, inadequate, vague and ill defined, a clumsy bludgeon, a Socialist dream, buck passing, eyewash, a kind of swindle and a smash and grab raid. His tones were acid as he read out this list. It was an effective piece of ridicule and restored for a moment the Shinwell of old.

At last after 24 days of debate, the Coal Nationalisation Bill left the Commons. Public ownership of the coal industry must be the ultimate test of Socialist theory and the Government were confident that the test would be successful. "We know that given the right men and the right atmosphere, we can inspire this great national industry in terms of abundance and true economy." Here was the long standing plan and there, below the earth, a half naked man lies on his side in water, working on a two-foot seam. Upon both to a large extent rests the industrial destiny of the nation.

The Government's next nationalisation Bill took them from the pits to the air. Again the method of boards appointed by the Minister was adopted. Three Corporations were to be formed. One British Overseas Airways Corporation had already been brought into existence by

the Coalition Government, the other two were the British European Airways Corporation and the British South American Airways Corporation BOAC was to be responsible for trans Atlantic traffic and BEAC for internal and European routes Three corporations had been created in order to develop a healthy spirit of competition & The boards of these corporations were to be appointed by the Minister and they were to be responsible for all routes running to a timetable, in other words the scheduled routes All the necessary airfields and airports were to be taken over by the State and the maximum aggregate of capital for the three corporations was to be £80 000 000

As Lord Winster, the Minister of Civil Aviation, is a member of the Lords, his Parliamentary Secretary, Ivor Thomas, was in need of a little assistance in the Commons and he got it in ample measure from Herbert Morrison who introduced the Second Reading of the Civil Aviation Bill in May First he attacked the position before the war under the Imperial Airways Corporation then he attacked the Swinton plan for competitive corporations plus Government subsidy, and finally he attacked private enterprise Imperial Airways was a miserable compromise, he thought It was inadequately subsidised from public funds, ham strung and controlled by the State, a completely hybrid affair There was also a tendency under the pre war system for air transport undertakings to "cream off" the profitable traffic routes and neglect others to the disadvantage of the public As for the Swinton plan—"Why should we go out of our way to manufacture a hotch potch and muddle of mixed up private enterprise or monopoly business under State regulation, in which we get the maximum of trouble ? That is getting the worst of both worlds It is our wish to get the best of both worlds which is, after all the great art of politics " To private enterprise in civil aviation he had several objections Weather forecasts could not very well be left to a whole series of competitive private concerns (There would be more chance of one of them being right —

Mr Eden) The State could carry out research more economically and on a bigger scale. The interrelations between civil aviation and the R.A.F. and the proportions of civil and Service aircraft production had also to be considered. In all these ways it was inevitable that the State 'should be in the business over a very wide field.'

On the other hand, argued Mr Morrison expansively, under comprehensive public ownership and public enterprise there would be sweep and boldness in civil aviation policy. It was easier for Parliament to subsidise a public concern run in the public interest than a private concern run for profit. Not that they would give subsidies for fun—they would not give more than was necessary and they would be tapered off as time went on. Further, national ownership meant that airfields could be adequate in size, numbers and services. The great new London airport at Heathrow would be utterly impossible on any other basis. No municipality or private enterprise undertaking could have carried the financial burden of such an airport.

In one direction the Government had been magnanimous towards private enterprise. Charter flying—the fire service—would be free for all.

Yes, grumbled a member, free for Government competition.

Mr Morrison pounced. 'The honourable member is afraid public enterprise will be superior. Already the Opposition are beginning to move. They will be urging next that public enterprise competition should be excluded on the ground that capitalist free enterprise cannot stand up to it.'

Mr Lennox Boyd (C), formerly Junior Minister for Civil Aviation moved briskly into the attack with the words of a distinguished pilot who had said that ice and politicians were the greatest menaces that civil aviation had to face. It was ludicrous, he thought, to talk of three corporations, geographically limited to separate parts of

the world, as competitive. The corporations were but three branches of a Government concern. The separate boards were pure eyewash, because all the shareholders were the Government in any case. The Government protected them against competition and guaranteed them against all financial loss. There was no spur to efficiency, no yardstick by which cost could be measured. It was all very well to keep the railway and shipping interests out but the railways had been very successful in airlines. During the war they had carried 300,000 passengers and seven million tons of freight with 95 per cent regularity of timetable and only one casualty—and that caused by enemy action.

The debate was on the whole rather confused. The Tories wanted an executive council like the American Civil Aeronautics Board which exercised general Government supervision. Some of the Government supporters seemed to want the same thing. Wing Commander Geoffrey Cooper for instance wanted an Air Transport Board of a general supervisory nature. Mr Mikardo (Lab) saw a real danger of the three boards being left with very little to do except lobby the Minister in competition with each other and interfere needlessly with the work of the administrative staff. He was worried about the appointments to the boards. He suspected that some of the members believed that nationalisation was wrong—it was like appointing an anarchist as chief constable or a fire-raiser to the head of the N.F.S. They were busy people too with a lot of outside interests who were likely only to pop into the corporation headquarters for an odd half hour or two between one board meeting and another. He moved an amendment later to provide that the members of the boards should serve full time and led a minor revolt of 23 Labour members into the Lobby in its favour.

The Opposition had their usual tilt at the Treasury. fairer game than ever before under a nationalisation scheme. Sir Wavell Wakefield (C) asked what would happen to a manufacturer who had some new idea or some different

type of aircraft to sell. If the State was his sole customer and he was turned down, where would he go? And he was likely to be turned down with the Treasury in control "We all know the battles that are fought with the Treasury clerk who has never flown in his life except in the flights of his imagination on his way between London and Surbiton."

"Will there be boards of guinea pigs with the Minister the biggest guinea pig of them all, to be twisted, twitted and chased by Treasury officials three times round the building every morning?" asked Major Fraser (C).

The only real storm in the debate blew down from Scotland. Strong claims were made for Prestwick as a main airport. The Government could not nationalise English or Scottish weather and Prestwick was the most fog proof airport in Europe. After all the promises that had been made where was Scotland in the Bill? Promises were not enough. Men could not live on menus and the Government had no mandate to throw geography over board. This Scottish wind reached gale force in the Lords where an amendment was passed to set up a Scottish associate company. This was urged with great force when it came up for consideration in the Commons. The Scottish Socialists did not support it and professed amazement at the outburst of Scottish nationalism among the Conservatives. "I think there is a little lucre lust in their newly found love of Scotland," suggested Malcolm MacMillan (Lab.) "They have been fickle fond and fly 'ill at once."

Ivor Thomas argued that they should work for a greater integration of the civil air forces of the world and not for splitting up existing forces. In any event there would be a Scottish division of BEAC and a Scottish advisory committee. Both BOAC and BEAC would have offices in Scotland. What more could be desired? So the Commons threw the amendment out.

As for general criticisms Ivor Thomas expressed himself surprised at the insipidated gloom in which the Conservatives bathed themselves and he tried to reassure them

that the old country was far from being played out because the Conservatives had lost the General Election. He rejected any idea of an Air Transport Board. Such a super-corporation to run the other three would entirely nullify the Government's policy. It was a policy that evidently went a little to the Parliamentary Secretary's head. The poetic Muse seems to alight in the most unexpected places on the Government front bench. The House listened almost aghast when Ivor Thomas spoke of pilots under State-control bursting into an

"... ampler ether, a diviner air,  
and fields invested with purpureal gleam."

## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

### MR. BEVIN HAS A BENEFIT

*I have waited twenty years for this—Ernest Bevin  
It is merely a piece of political tit for tat—Quintin Hogg*

POLITICAL grievances die hard and the wounds inflicted in the past continue, in Parliamentary parlance, to be "festering sores" long after the weapons that dealt them have become obsolete. The Trade Disputes Act, passed in 1927 as a consequence of the General Strike of 1926, was a prime example of such a festering sore. The short effect of this Act was to confine legal strikes to those which were in furtherance of a trade dispute to the industry immediately concerned, to broaden the definition of intimidation from physical violence or the threat of it to "causing in the mind of a person a reasonable apprehension of injury", to substitute "contracting in" for "contracting out" in the matter of subscribing to the political funds of a trade union, to prohibit associations of established civil servants from affiliating with trade unions, and to prevent local or public authorities making membership of a trade union a condition of employment.

It was of this Act that Ernest Bevin, resuming for the occasion his old role as the Dockers' K.C., declared: "I am fighting to remove the stigma the Tory Party put upon me in 1927 as a leader of a trade union. As an old trade unionist of more than 40 years' standing, I say that just as I had a clear card in my union, I want this Act off the Statute Book so that we may have a clear card before the law." And indeed, when the Government majority carried the Trade Disputes and Trade Unions Bill, which repealed the 1927 Act, it seemed that those 40 years slid away from his bulky frame and he clapped his hands like a boy.

But before this could happen there were long and stormy debates, clouded by much close legal argument and hag-

ridden by rancour from the past. From the very moment when the young Attorney-General, Sir Hartley Shawcross, launched the Second Reading of the repealing Bill with all his charm in advocacy and good manners in invective there was trouble all the way. Prefacing a long speech with a plea for a debate without heat or bitterness he proceeded to charge the Opposition with political misrepresentation and chicanery in their campaign against the Bill—but he did it in the most assable manner imaginable.

The 1927 Act, he said, had certain purposes, all of which it failed utterly to achieve. There had been only an insignificant diminution of the political funds of the trade unions, nor had the unions or the Labour Party been prevented from going on from strength to strength. But at the same time it had created among working people a sense of injustice, a feeling that the law had turned against them. It was in fact as clear and as iniquitous a piece of discriminatory class legislation as was ever placed upon the Statute Book. As for the attempt to make certain strikes illegal, wartime experience had shown that it was utterly impossible to prevent unofficial strikes by the processes of criminal law. If such strikes opposed by the unions and the community as a whole, could not be stopped, what chance was there of stopping a general strike, supported by the unions and by that very large section of the community made up of trade unionists their families and friends? You might as well try to shoot down a rocket bomb with a pea shooter. A strike intending to overthrow the constitutional government of the country would always be illegal and if any particular body of men tried to coerce the Government or obtain a change in the law by unconstitutional means then an indictment lay against them for criminal conspiracy—not of course that any Government in their senses would try to suppress a strike by means of criminal prosecution. Thus by repealing the Act a conflict with the law would be avoided which the law would inevitably lose with grave consequences.

The definition of intimidation in the 1927 Act he characterized as artificial. It brought about the position that when trade unionists found themselves having to work alongside non unionists and went on strike for that reason, it was legal but if one of them beforehand tried, in a perfectly friendly and peaceful way, to persuade a non unionist to join the union and told him that otherwise they would have to go on strike, that was illegal intimidation. It was lawful to boycott a man who was sticking out and not striking with his friends, but illegal to say to him beforehand that you would boycott him if he did stand out. Even worse under the Act intimidation need have nothing to do with trade disputes at all. "If, for instance," he added slyly, "some one wanted to influence votes in a General Election and, speaking over the wireless with all the authority of a great political leader, said 'The Gestapo will get you. There will be a political police I assure you, if you vote Socialist.' Such a man, if there were such a man, would be liable to be fined 40s at the instance of some timid housemaid who had been caused a restless night."

It was a pity that Mr Churchill was at that time away in America for such quips would have drawn some mighty rejoinders. But even without Mr Churchill the debate turned out to be one of the stormiest of the Session. One of its remarkable features was the continual change of atmosphere. At one moment the Chamber seemed to be the stage for a heated trade union meeting. At another it became a Court of Appeal with learned counsel bandying conflicting legal opinions. It was a debate within a debate one concerned with the present circumstances of repeal and the other a reproduction of the debate on the 1927 Act with all the arguments about the General Strike its origins, legality and purpose disinterred from past volumes of Hansard. Mr Bevin in particular spoke passionately on the events leading up to and surrounding the General Strike and concluded that it was really a cooked business an attempt to destroy the economic and political power of the

working men in this country. Why otherwise did the Conservatives refuse, for the first and only time in trade union legislation, to hold an inquiry or give the trade unions a chance to state their case before presenting the Trade Disputes Bill?

The broad charge against the Government was that they were throwing the question of the legality of a general strike back into its pre-1927 obscurity, in which one set of lawyers maintained that it was illegal and another that it ought to be and was allowed. Was this the famous Socialist mysticism, beginning in mist and ending in schism? The rule of law, it was contended, demanded that where an act ought to be condemned, it ought to be condemned by law as well as by fact. But Sir Stafford Cripps observed that our constitution was not written anywhere and that the rule of law did not depend on everything being accurately set out in the statute. The Minister of Labour added that Mr Eden himself once went on strike and one of his colleagues joined in a sympathetic strike with him. Was not that a strike to coerce the Government?

Like the fog that surrounded the Chamber on the second day of the debate there was also a legal haze surrounding the intimidation issue. Under the 1927 Act all the various forms of mental pressure which could be brought to bear on a 'blackleg' fell within the definition of intimidation and the Act also distinguished between a warning and a threat and between 'watching and besetting' a man's place of work and his home. Painful stories of how the life of a man's wife and family could be made a misery by picketing were told to cries of 'Nonsense!' from the trade unionists. The Attorney General thought you might just as well call political canvassing intimidation and went on to indicate that in the 20 years before the 1927 Act no Home Secretary had asked for additional powers to deal with intimidation as then defined.

On these two issues there were only two opinions of the Bill but on the others there was a middle opinion held

mostly by those Liberals and Independents who supported the Bill but were against "closed shops," contracting out and the introduction of politics into the Civil Service. The Government frankly admitted that in any large body of people there was a certain degree of "human inertia" which prevented some taking any particular action—such as filling in a form, whether to contract in or out—and if the majority in any union voted in favour of a particular fund it was surely reasonable that they should benefit rather than lose by this form of inertia. 'Profit motive!' cried the Opposition. "You've got peaceful picketing and now you want peaceful pocketing!"

Mr Eden was more cunning. What if the majority in a union did not happen to be a Labour majority? There were, it was true, only two Communist members in the House—a cloud no bigger than a man's hand. But Mr Bevin himself had referred to Communist propaganda against the British Government all over the world and everyone knew that such propaganda was active in the trade union movement. And if that did not frighten the Government enough, he estimated that at least a score—perhaps 30—Government supporters favoured the Communist point of view more than that of their own front bench.

As an ex Chancellor of the Exchequer, the views of Sir John Anderson on the affiliation of civil service associations with the TUC were listened to with respect. He thought that it might be possible for these organisations to be affiliated for industrial, but not political purposes, provided that the right of the Government to lay down rules of conduct for at least certain branches of the service was preserved. Mr Bevin regarded it as another stigma to keep them out. Lord Willoughby de Eresby (C) envisaged the civil servant having two loyalties, one to the Government of the day and one to the TUC which might well be opposed to the Government and working against its policy. This was ridiculous, asserted W. J. Brown (Ind.), speaking with the authority of the Civil Service Clerical Association.

## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

### THE RUSSIAN 'ENIGMA'

*I cannot be accused of not wanting friendship with the Soviet Union -- Ernest Bevin*

THE discussion on foreign policy which took place in February caught the House in a state of doubt and uneasiness. It was noticeable that many members had left the higher strata of idealism but had not yet found their feet on the more mundane level of realism and practical politics. This was no doubt due to the fact that the first meeting of the United Nations organisation in the Central Hall Westminster had just concluded and it was difficult to determine whether the new world organisation had got off to a good or a bad start—or indeed to any sort of a start at all. No one could deny that the conduct of the General Assembly had been impeccable and that the ancillary organisations had been constituted under the most admirable auspices. But what was one to make of the astonishing scenes that took place in the Security Council which instead of functioning as the supreme court of arbitration in international disputes seemed to have become a boiling cauldron of controversy overnight?

The trouble had started directly Persia appeared on the agenda of the Council. Some months earlier Soviet troops stationed in North Persia had stopped forces sent by the Persian Government to restore order in Azerbaijan where a movement for independence had resorted to violence. The issue that lay before the Council was whether this was an interference with the independence and sovereignty of Persia guaranteed by Treaty. The Soviet delegates showed considerable agility and before the question could be fully examined three more issues were brought before the Council in all of which Great Britain was involved—Indonesia, Greece and the Levant States. By the time the

had been disposed of the Russians were able to claim that the Persian issue was of no further interest to the Council, since it was the subject of direct negotiation between the Russian and Persian Governments

The prevalent theory, to which subsequent events gave countenance was that the Indonesian and Greek issues were merely introduced as a counter barrage to divert attention from Persia. Mr Bevin himself told the House that his Soviet friends were suspicious of him when Persia was put on the agenda and he confessed amiably 'I have an honest face but it doesn't impress them somehow. So they dumped in Indonesia and Greece.'

The fact remained that there had been some very stormy passages between Mr Vishinsky, leading the Soviet delegation and Mr Bevin. There was a feeling that our Foreign Secretary had had a most provoking time of it, but was this new sort of open diplomacy likely to promote the harmony of nations? Mr Bevin did not seem to have any worries on that score. 'I didn't mind at all,' he said. 'Those who make up the Soviet Union are members of the proletariat and so am I. We are used to hard hitting but our friendship remains. I don't think exchanges of views of this kind do any more harm than the exchanges of views at a Labour Party Conference. I think the knock about method is not so bad after all.'

Nor were speakers on either of the front benches inclined to write off the first meeting of the world organisation as a failure or anything like it. Harold Macmillan (C) said

'The mere launching of the organisation with its manifold activities is a gain. The young plant which some thought too tender to be exposed prematurely to the storm of controversy has survived. That is a gain. Frank—sometimes brutally frank—discussion has taken place in the open in the full glare of publicity with all the modern technique. Yet the personal relationships of the protagonists remained friendly. We are so accustomed to that tradition in our Parliamentary life that perhaps we do not

behind him. Could anyone imagine a Socialist postman who found himself with a letter to Mr. Churchill saying "Blimey, this letter don't go to him, down the drain with it?"

But not all the arguments were marked either by reason or relevance. For one thing, the Committee stage took place on two days during an April heat wave and the second sitting dragged on until nearly 5.30 in the morning, at that time a record for the Session. The behaviour of the House always follows a pattern on these occasions. Round about midnight, as the last means of transport disappear, bad temper is prevalent. This yields gradually to a mood of resignation, which in turn develops a tendency to humorous irrelevancy and rather extravagant oratory. Beverley Baxter (C), as one dogged by uneasy dreams, saw the country moving towards the corporate State. "After that, only one Party. The other will be in gaol." Quintin Hogg (C), who had himself denounced the Government as being slightly less bitten by the totalitarian bug than the Nazis, reacted to interruptions from Mrs Braddock (Lab) by referring to her as his "pin up girl." To this Mrs Braddock made the very masculine retort—"For a long time I have been awaiting this opportunity to tell the honourable gentleman that I very often feel tempted to grab him by the back of the neck—" But what she then wanted to do was lost in cries of "Order!" from the delighted Opposition and the Deputy Chairman gravely enquired what all this had to do with the amendment. "The term pin up girl presupposes something," grumbled Mrs Braddock mysteriously. "Nevertheless I find nothing about it in the amendment," said the Deputy Chairman, firmly closing the incident.

This was by no means the only time Mr Hogg was interrupted, or indeed the only time he spoke. An impression is left that the whole course of the debate was mainly a duel between Mr Hogg and the Attorney General. Quintin Hogg's father, now Lord Hailsham, had been in

charge of the 1927 Act, and his son's opposition to its repeal was therefore the stronger for filial fervour. Even so, he experienced his usual difficulty in submerging his innate good humour in political indignation. The young Pickwick whom he resembled would peep out.

Along with others he urged the Government to abandon the negative attitude of repeal and seize the opportunity of clearly defining by law the relation between the trade union movement and Parliament and the individual, a task that became the more urgent the more industry was progressively nationalised. But this prompted him to an impish desire to twist the Government's tail and incidentally to one of his best passages. Unlike the Conservative Party, he affirmed, the Government were guilty of underrating the strength of the trade union movement. "It is a very far cry from the Tolpuddle Martyrs and all that to the Labour Government of 1946," he said. "We are in the presence of the most powerful corporation that has existed in this country since the Roman Catholic Church was disestablished. It claims more adherents than many members of the United Nations have subjects. It has gigantic funds at its disposal. It has a sort of Parliament and civil service of its own. This is no hot house plant, shrinking from every blackleg who refuses to join the Transport and General Workers' Union, terrified that the Government will coerce it, fearful and apprehensive of the verdict of the courts." From this Mr Hogg took an easy step to the uncomfortable suggestion that the Government should legalise a general strike and let the TUC assume the responsibility for acting as a brake on it. This would withdraw the whole matter from the purview of Parliament and fall in with the implied proposition of Sir Walter Citrine the TUC's General Secretary!

The Government were impervious alike to criticism and helpful suggestions. They were determined to have the Bill, the whole Bill and nothing but the Bill. And have it they did, without a word of amendment by 349 votes to 182.

## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

# THE RUSSIAN 'ENIGMA'

*I cannot be accused of not wanting friendship with the Soviet Union*—Ernest Bevin

THE discussion on foreign policy which took place in February caught the House in a state of doubt and uneasiness. It was noticeable that many members had left the higher strata of idealism but had not yet found their feet on the more mundane level of realism and practical politics. This was no doubt due to the fact that the first meeting of the United Nations organisation in the Central Hall Westminster, had just concluded, and it was difficult to determine whether the new world organisation had got off to a good or a bad start—or, indeed, to any sort of a start at all. No one could deny that the conduct of the General Assembly had been impeccable and that the ancillary organisations had been constituted under the most admirable auspices. But what was one to make of the astonishing scenes that took place in the Security Council, which instead of functioning as the supreme court of arbitration in international disputes, seemed to have become a boiling cauldron of controversy overnight?

The trouble had started directly Persia appeared on the agenda of the Council. Some months earlier Soviet troops stationed in North Persia had stopped forces sent by the Persian Government to restore order in Azerbaijan, where a movement for independence had resorted to violence. The issue that lay before the Council was whether this was an interference with the independence and sovereignty of Persia guaranteed by Treaty. The Soviet delegates showed considerable agility and before the question could be fully examined three more issues were brought before the Council in all of which Great Britain was involved—Indonesia, Greece and the Levant States. By the time these

had been disposed of the Russians were able to claim that the Persian issue was of no further interest to the Council, since it was the subject of direct negotiation between the Russian and Persian Governments

The prevalent theory, to which subsequent events gave countenance, was that the Indonesian and Greek issues were merely introduced as a counter-barrage to divert attention from Persia. Mr. Bevin himself told the House that his Soviet friends were suspicious of him when Persia was put on the agenda and he confessed amiably. "I have an honest face, but it doesn't impress them somehow. So they dumped in Indonesia and Greece."

The fact remained that there had been some very stormy passages between Mr. Vishinsky, leading the Soviet delegation, and Mr. Bevin. There was a feeling that our Foreign Secretary had had a most provoking time of it, but was this new sort of open diplomacy likely to promote the harmony of nations? Mr. Bevin did not seem to have any worries on that score. "I didn't mind at all," he said. "Those who make up the Soviet Union are members of the proletariat, and so am I. We are used to hard hitting, but our friendship remains. I don't think exchanges of views of this kind do any more harm than the exchanges of views at a Labour Party Conference. I think the knock-about method is not so bad after all."

Nor were speakers on either of the front benches inclined to write off the first meeting of the world organisation as a failure or anything like it. Harold Macmillan (C) said "The mere launching of the organisation, with its manifold activities, is a gain. The young plant, which some thought too tender to be exposed prematurely to the storm of controversy, has survived. That is a gain. Frank—sometimes brutally frank—discussion has taken place in the open, in the full glare of publicity with all the modern technique. Yet the personal relationships of the protagonists remained friendly. We are so accustomed to that tradition in our Parliamentary life that perhaps we do not

realise its importance in international life. That is a gain. Finally, in the important issues on which the conduct of the British Government has been challenged the honour and good faith of Great Britain has been broadly justified by the verdict of the world assembly. All these are clear gains."

Having said this much on the credit side, Mr. Macmillan then turned to the debit side and found it very gloomy indeed. "The relations between the Great Powers are greatly, even alarmingly strained," he admitted. "It would be folly not to recognise that the Anglo-American-Russian alliance that held so firmly throughout the war is virtually, if not formally, in abeyance. Soviet diplomacy, for whatever reason, seems to be concentrating upon outward pressure in the Mediterranean and the Middle East against well recognised and established British interests. What is the motive behind these manœuvres?"

He was reminded of Metternich's reception of the news of the death of the Russian Ambassador at the Congress of Vienna. "Ah," he said, "is it true? What can have been his motive?"

The Security Council was being used as the instrument of power politics with new rules but old motives, he went on. We did not want this to be an age of open diplomacy and secret fear, and it was therefore essential to learn the truth about Soviet policy, while taking care that in our approach to these matters we were not pro-Russian or anti-Russian—we should be pro-mankind. Was this a new Russian imperialist drive, or was it a return to the proselytising fervour of international Communism? Or might it not be that at bottom Soviet policy was isolationist and not expansionist, and was aimed at security for Russia?

Many members tried to answer these questions and the debate developed into a series of character studies of the Russian. Brigadier Rayner (C), who had served with Russian soldiers during the war, emphasised the essentially oriental side of the Russian. The typical Russian he said,

would not be hurried, had no understanding of compromise, was prone to "save face" and regarded human life as rather cheap. More important, in considering his motives, he was very much a realist and highly nationalistic, and to him might was still right. Russia herself was still internationalist, but only so far as internationalism would serve her nationalism. Wilson Harris (Ind.) had given his views in an earlier debate, when stressing the need to plumb Russia's motives. If we ascribed to her the wrong motives we were likely to develop a wrong policy in response to them. Perhaps they had a general desire for political domination. Perhaps they wanted security—but if so, against whom? Perhaps they had both an inferiority and a superiority complex. But the fact remained that Russia was an autocracy, and an autocracy had to support itself by public opinion the whole time. That was why the Press in Russia was censored and why there was a political police. As Hitler had shown, an autocracy always had to have an opponent, it had to be saving the country from some danger within or without. For Russia the enemy had been the White Russians, the Trotskyites and the Germans, and now, for the moment, America and Great Britain were cast for the role.

Anthony Eden read into the Russian attitude the scourge of invasion and the memory that it was only 80 000 000 Germans who nearly dealt a mortal thrust to 180 000 000 Russians both resulting in a determination not to allow Germany to be in a position to do this again and have as friendly neighbours as she could. Unfortunately it often happened that those whom the Soviet Government thought they could trust among their neighbours were not those whom the majority in those countries wished to govern them and this made it difficult for example for the United States to recognise the Governments of Bulgaria and Rumania. But he believed that the Russians were sincere in their desire to collaborate with Britain and the United States and in wishing that the United Nations organisation

should function. But in wanting this collaboration she appeared only to want it on her own terms. That would not work. It was only fair to add that whatever might be said in Russian newspapers or over their wireless no statesman of the Soviet Union ever raised any objection to our making arrangements with our near neighbours in Western Europe.

Mr Bevin replied that he had deliberately raised this question when he was in Moscow for the Council of Foreign Ministers. He had said "You want friendly neighbours. Well, I want friendly neighbours in my street too. I am entitled to them, but I will do nothing that injures you. The British Government will do nothing without informing you. We will tell you everything. We have a treaty of friendship. If you want to change that from 20 years to 50 years I will advise my Government to do it." This offer he later admitted did not seem to be taken very seriously at the time but he would keep trying.

Whatever were the reasons for the cleavage between Russian and Western policies and these reasons were just as obscure at the end of the debate as at the beginning there was no difference of opinion on its evil effects on Europe. Robert Boothby (C) thought the term United Nations was something of a misnomer. The United Nations Assembly was merely an international talking shop. That was as far as it had got yet, and so long as the veto remained in its present form that was as far as it would ever get. He was not afraid of war in the near or even the middle future, but he was afraid of a kind of frozen peace based on suspicion and fear. We appeared to have no views of any kind on the future of Germany. Mr Molotov discovered this at Yalta, Potsdam and San Francisco. He found the Western democracies divided, undecided, disunited and impotent. It was easy for him to run through their ranks and impose his own terms on Eastern Europe—and the ball was still at his feet.

If only the Four Powers would stick together for the

next decade or so and have a common policy, was Wilfrid Roberts' (L) pious wish. In that case it would be madness to destroy the economic strength of Germany because it could be used for the benefit of Europe. The Ruhr could be internationalised economically and politically and its coal and steel resources and great industrial potential used for the well being of Europe and the world. Support for these views came from all quarters of the House. Not only were there advantages in adopting a common policy towards Germany, in Harold Macmillan's opinion, but there were grave dangers in not doing so. If dispute and acrimony and intense feeling between East and West continued and developed, Germany would become a menace to peace.

Germany, now cast down, despised, shunned like an unclean thing will once more be courted by each of the two groups, and from a starving outcast she will become the pampered courtesan of Europe, selling her favours to the highest bidder. She will once more have lost the war and won the peace, and Hitler's dream and mad prophecies will have come true. The seeds of war are not sown in the years immediately preceding the conflict, it is the first years after war that are the critical years. Therefore before it is too late, let us act."

To all this urgent clamour the Foreign Secretary presented a patient and sympathetic front. All that could be done for Russia, Poland and the satellite States in respect of Germany had been done he said but they had not yet made up their minds about the Western frontiers. The heart of aggression in Germany was the Ruhr but it was also potentially a great productive area. Should he, for the first reason, restrict its output or should he aim at a policy under which the Ruhr would be a productive unit for Europe as a whole, including Russia including everyone so that its products went East and West and so raised the standard of life in Europe? Here his industrial instinct told him that the right thing to do was to hand over the Ruhr to public ownership under international control.

with each Government owning a share in the concern and sitting on the governing body

Mr Bevin also had a word to say about the other ex-enemy country Italy. He opposed treating Italy as if Mussolini was still alive. All the countries which had been under dictatorships had lost their political legs and it was our task to help them get their muscles back so that they might stand on their own feet and walk erect. Italy had gone a long way to work her passage but he thought the nationalities around her were being pushed too far. There was often a great conflict between ethnic frontiers and economic necessities. Great electrical power had been built up by the Italians in the Tyrol in territory ethnically Austrian. Could not this great economic power be made to serve both Austria and Italy and still solve the ethnic problem? Why could there not be wherever the ethnic line went joint companies or some such arrangement under which both countries could have the benefit of the raw materials which existed in territories of that kind? But he could not answer these questions at that moment. He was only thinking aloud. Members pondering their own Russian Enigma Variations devoutly hoped it was not wishful-thinking.

## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

# THE WAR AGAINST HUNGER

*The world food shortage is a retribution which falls on the innocent for the general follies of mankind—Clement Attlee*

THROUGHOUT the Parliamentary Session there was one problem ever before the Cabinet which, in spite of every effort, persisted in growing to monstrous proportions. This was the world food shortage, particularly in the two great staple foods on which the greater part of the human race depends—wheat and rice. Europe supplied itself with a great proportion of its wheat requirements in pre war days, but it was the principal market for the great surplus areas of Canada, the United States, the Argentine and Australia. In Asia, India, Malaya, China and Japan depended for a proportion of their needs on the surplus produced in Burma, Siam and Indo China.

The German war cut off the European market, except for Britain, and the surplus countries accumulated reserves. They also reduced their acreage, while an enhanced home demand followed on increased purchasing power. In Europe—except in Britain—war conditions reduced production. In Asia, the Japanese war severed the consuming from the producing areas, with the result that output in Burma, Siam and Indo-China was reduced. Moreover the constant rise in the population of India by five millions a year increased the demand.

At the end of the European war—when it was still anticipated that the Japanese war would continue for a further 12 or 18 months—it was calculated that the great stocks built up by the wheat-exporting countries would tide the world over until normal harvests were resumed, and it was even thought reasonable that the Coalition Government should decide to allow our own wheat production to fall

from its wartime peak and encourage the hope that more feedingstuffs would be available from Autumn, 1945, in order to build up our livestock which we had probably reduced more than most countries.

But by September these pleasant anticipations were wearing a little thin and by Christmas things had definitely got out of hand. When the Food Minister, Sir Ben Smith, came down to the House in February, after a visit to Washington, the story he had to tell reminded Sir Arthur Salter (Ind.) of the first chapter of the Book of Job. Here was a good man in adversity, afflicted by an incredible succession of unmerited misfortunes. He was surrounded by his friends—true Job's comforters—who were obviously discouraged and also, it seemed rather obviously asking themselves whether Job was really quite such a good man as they had thought. He told the House of a succession of messengers of woe each treading on the heels of the other—

"And while he yet spake there came also another. He told of droughts in North Africa and in South Africa, droughts in the Argentine and Australia, miscalculations of stocks in North America, bad weather in the South Pacific, monsoons and cyclones. 'All perfectly true,' commented Sir Arthur, 'but were these disasters really so sudden, so simultaneous, so unpredictable?'

Certainly Sir Ben Smith did not look like a prophet of doom or anything else. He was ill-cast for the role of Job. Endowed with a Dickensian plumpness and joviality, Sir Ben Smith was apt to take the House into his rather raucous confidence and was rumbustious when attacked. Despondency sat uneasily on his genial countenance as he announced that the wheat available for the importing countries in the first six months of 1946 was five and a half millions tons short of requirements. Britain had accepted a reduction of nearly a quarter of a million tons in her imports. This could only be met by raising the flour extraction rate to 85 per cent and this in turn meant less feedingstuff for

livestock, less poultry, bacon and eggs. Nor was this all. Shortage of rice for India meant that she had to cut her export of ground nuts to this country by half, and this, combined with the disappointing outcome of the resumption of whaling in the Antarctic, would lead to a cut in Britain's fat ration. Further steps to meet this forbidding situation were the deferment of the call up of 8,000 agricultural workers and an appeal to farmers from Tom Williams, the Minister of Agriculture, to sow as much grain as they could in the Spring.

The House could not pass by so serious a situation without debate. The main criticism of the Government was that the country should and could have been warned much earlier of these impending misfortunes. The cat had been too long in the bag. David Eccles (C) wanted to know if food had the highest priority in the import programme. If it had not, and more food could be brought in why were we still importing the same quantities of tobacco and films? If it had then why had the Government done nothing in the Autumn to stimulate food production at home? Was it because the three taxes, films, tobacco and beer, were the three pin up girls of the Board of Inland Revenue?

In facing this criticism Sir Ben Smith was obliged to perform that function of a politician which was once described as "trying to explain to a sceptical and bewildered electorate the defects of an inscrutable Providence". It had been necessary, he said to soft pedal fears of a worldwide grain shortage in case the confidence of holders of wheat was undermined and the thousands of small peasant farmers were encouraged to hoard. Nor could he disclose our wheat stocks at a time when there was a sellers market. It would afford a great opportunity to the sellers to raise prices against him. 'In a world in which many countries are suffering from semi starvation it is a sad commentary on what has to be done on the altar of profit.'

One of the privations which had descended upon the

housewife as a consequence of the cessation of lend lease was the sudden turning off of the dried egg supply. On top of all else this caused a domestic stir. Mrs Jean Mann (Lab) assailed the decision to stop supplies with a battery of recipes. Against these she set some cynical summaries of current Hollywood films. These like dried eggs cost precious dollars she said but if the housewife could choose she would choose dried egg. Not only that but Sir Ben lacked the Woolton technique. Housewives had to be wooed they did not like to be told. As for dried egg you've had it.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer rode to the rescue of a colleague distressed by fair maidens. The import programme for the first half of 1946 he announced showed that food and agricultural products were 56 per cent of the total imports the raw materials were 33½ per cent tobacco four and a half per cent manufactured goods four and a half per cent and films only one and a half per cent.

In the following three months difficulties multiplied. The world wheat deficit rose from five and a half million to eight million tons and the failure of the monsoons in India not only sent India's demands up but also sent Sir Ben Smith to Washington again to press India's claims. In April after months of badgering from Sir Arthur Salter the Government produced a White Paper on the World Food Situation. It served only to encourage Sir Arthur like a persistent gadfly still further to goad the Food Minister for failing to foresee what he should have foreseen in the five crucial months from the previous September.

Others might have been accused of self deception but not he said Sir Arthur. He could look with a frank and fearless gaze on any prospect however grave—and fail to see it.

This atmosphere of exasperation enclosed the whole debate on the White Paper. The critical situation was due in the opinion of Rob Hudson (C.) not to an exceptional

series of droughts—because global wheat production over the whole year remained more or less unaffected by droughts in one or other part of the world—but to faulty price-fixing in the chief producing countries, under which it paid farmers to feed grain to livestock or to sell it for industrial purposes rather than to let it go for direct human consumption. "Well," rejoined Sir Ben Smith. "You can't expect me to interfere with a sovereign country on that point." In any case, he argued, even if the weather did not make all that difference to global wheat production, the fact remained that owing to the war European countries yielded only half their pre war total.

Jennie Lee (Lab.) made no attempt to disguise her exasperation. She claimed that world leadership on the food front was being given, not by the United States or the Soviet Union, but by Great Britain, which had the finest rationing system and the smallest black market in the world. "After all," she said. "There was no rationing of the blitz, and if there was anything like equality of sacrifice between America and Europe, then the menace of famine could be lifted at least from Europe." Russia too should be told what a grave wrong she was doing herself in sending half a million tons of grain to France when there was starvation in the Russian occupation zone. There was nothing more despicable than to play "food politics" at such a time. Mr Lennox-Boyd (C) preferred to call them "hunger politics" when he alleged that food was tending to go where the political feelings of the producing countries wanted it to go. The Argentine, for instance, had sent wheat to Spain and Portugal but could not get fuel which would prevent her burning grain. UNRRA had sent an agricultural cargo to Poland and 75 per cent of it was immediately shipped to the Soviet Union.

It was left to Sir John Boyd Orr (Ind.), the new Director General of the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, to lift the debate from this level of recrimination to a more forward looking point of view.

The object of FAO, he explained, was to raise the levels of nutrition of people in all countries of the world and also the standard of living of the food producers. Before the war one half of the world's population suffered from lack of food and only when the world decided to feed the peoples of the world as human beings should be fed would there be that increased market for agricultural products which would prevent a recurrence of agricultural slumps.

'There are only two alternatives facing nations today—collaboration for their mutual benefit, or war for their mutual destruction. I believe that in this appalling crisis it will be possible through the FAO to lay the foundation of permanent collaboration among the nations in a plan which will bring about a world food scheme based on human needs—and this would set going a really benevolent revolution.'

## CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

### FINDING THE MONEY

*I am <sup>1</sup>referred to be reasonably human.—Hugh Dalton*

BETWEEN the wars it would be safe to say that public attention was only wholly directed towards Parliament on one day in the year and that was Budget Day. The 1945-6 Session was thus at least sure of securing twice the normal share of public attention, since it included two Budget Days. More accurately there was an interim and a final Budget. The first, in October, was merely a curtain raiser to the second. Its confessed object was to offer an incentive to a population long denied any incentive other than that compelling one of defeating the King's enemies, and for that reason it was called the 'Jam To-morrow' Budget.

phenomenon occurred. A deep-throated growl of approval surged up from the benches behind him, a very grim sound seldom heard in the Chamber. For a moment the guillotine flashed and the heads tumbled. Opposition eyebrows were raised. Was this the Revolution?

For motor taxation the method of calculating horse power according to cylinder bore was to go "The cylinder bore, like other bores, has no friends". EPT was to be reduced to 60 per cent and certain articles of importance to housing were to be freed from Purchase Tax, so that, as one member put it, the country could boil and freeze free of tax.

In the following discussions the memory of that formidable growl at the raising of the Surtax lingered. Mr Churchill warned the Chancellor of exaggerated hopes. He was no longer at the first frontier of a large and fertile territory. The entire area had been swept through, harvested and gleaned, and gleaned again and again. He stood on the far side of what was now a thoroughly scrubbed field. This point was further underlined. In 1938 the number of people left with £6,000 a year after taxation was 7,000, but in 1945 it was down to 80. So the Chancellor need not worry about redistribution of income. Sir John Anderson weighed in with some financial philosophy. The pursuit of economic equality was, in his opinion, a questionable doctrine which might lead to stagnation. Was a man to be reproached because he wished to do better than his neighbours? On the contrary, provided that the lowest level of income was not too low by the standards of human need, and the higher levels were attainable to all as rewards of character, ability and enterprise, economic inequality was good. Surtax weakened and destroyed the initiative of a small number of men, exceptional individuals, whose services to the nation might far transcend that of a battalion of ordinary men.

But the highest incomes in this country were not the result of individual effort, protested Mr. Beeson (Lab.)

They were derived from the ownership of inherited land. Social services of high intellectual quality was given to the nation by the technicians and research workers on not particularly large salaries, while the big incomes were made by men of business acumen who exploited their work and discoveries. Sir John was really confusing the really great with the really rich, commented Glenvil Hall, the Financial Secretary. Many a truly great man had died in a garret.

The Chancellor was accused of 'soaking the rich' for a mere £7,000 000, enough to run the country for about 12 hours. If that was so, he retorted, then it could not be doing a lot of aggregate harm to enterprise. The Surtax payer, he went on, was actually deriving a moderate benefit under the proposals. The grievance seemed to be that he was not deriving an immoderate benefit. It was not enough for him to get a few hundreds of pounds more by way of tax relief—he ought to have thousands! Still, he admitted graciously, some of them did work out of a sense of public spirit—but these would work just as hard whether they had a thousand pounds more or less.

There were some gloomy prognostications about inflation. Some contended that it was already with us in camouflaged form. The purchasing power of the pound was falling, they said. Our debt per head was greater today than that of any other country—in 1944 every child was born £400 in debt! But more members preferred to launch their individual attacks on their own particular bugbears. Beer and tobacco taxes were unpopular. No one had done more to support the revenue during the war than that excellent person the beer drinker affirmed Gurney Braithwaite (C). They had been the more patriotic in that they had given their money to the Exchequer and had not indulged in any saving campaign or in building up a sinking fund (Drinking fund?—A member). The tax on whisky affronted the Scottish soul of Robert Boothby (C). It was in his view savage and unconscionable and a gross injury to the people of Scotland. The Chancellor was unmoved. He felt that

people were much more stimulated by the prospect of something off income tax than they would be by sacrificing an equal amount of revenue in making beer and tobacco a little cheaper when beer was so weak and cigarettes so few. They would much rather wait until the beer was more worth drinking.

In the main this first peacetime Budget received a good reception. It was a "little man's Budget," releasing some two million from income tax altogether. When the reductions came into force in April nobody was worse off and everybody, in some degree or other, was better off in terms of taxation.

The shape of the nation's finances was not fully revealed until April, when once again the Chancellor revelled in a great Parliamentary occasion. For over two hours he held the attention of the House while he expounded with inimitable clarity and emphasis the staggering totals of national income and expenditure. He sustained himself during this feat with sips of milk poured from a small silver coffee pot—a drink which was rumoured to be not so innocent as it appeared.

He had a heartening story to tell in this second Budget speech. Purchase tax, income tax, beer and tobacco and entertainments taxes had all broken records. This was reflected in the year's revenue of £3,284,000,000 against an expenditure of £5,484,000,000, the deficit being £2,200,000,000—£100,000,000 less than the estimate. Looking ahead, Mr Dalton showed a sturdy optimism, estimating income at £3,161,000,000 and expenditure at £3,887,000,000, showing a deficit of £726,000,000. [Later the reduction of 15 per cent in the content of beer, owing to the world shortage of cereals, involved the Chancellor in a loss of about £48,000,000 on Beer Duty and brought his deficit up to £775,000,000.] This meant that, taking into account non-recurring war items, for every pound of expenditure he expected to provide 16s 5d out of revenue, against 12s in the previous year. Leaving the non recurring

items out of account the figure would be 18s 2d. So we are not very far off a balanced Budget this year, he announced triumphantly against a background of cheers.

Even when he faced an estimated excess of £750 000 000 of overseas expenditure (mainly on imports and the maintenance of troops abroad) over receipts from exports, the Chancellor's optimism persisted. Exports were rising more rapidly than some people had thought likely. Imported food prices however were also rising steadily and the cost of living subsidies which now stood at £335 000 000 might have to rise with them since he was still as determined as ever to hold prices substantially at their existing level. The cost of the central group of social services was also likely to rise from £500 000 000 in 1946-7 to £700 000 000 in two years.

But the chief item of expenditure was £1 667 000 000 on the Supply and Defence Departments and on this he hoped to save. A figure of about £500 000 000 a year used to be taken as a rough estimate. Under this head came £80 000 000 in the year which we were paying for administering our zone in Germany partly for food for the Germans there. This food cost us dollars from our limited resources and the Chancellor frowned over this. I am quite sure the British taxpayer cannot and should not much longer be expected to go on paying on this scale what are, in effect, reparations to Germany.

When he came to his actual proposals the Chancellor was in an open handed rather than a close-fisted mood. He announced a long list of remissions from Purchase Tax and all was smiles. But he refused to regard this tax as temporary and the smiles faded. The scale of entertainment duty was lowered for all outdoor sports and such indoor games as billiards and chess but dogs, horses and cun-mas did not benefit from this. The earned income allowance and the special allowance to married women in industry were both increased. So the catalogue of good and indifferent cheer went on. E.P.T. was to go and the National

Defence Contribution, re-christened the "Profits Tax" was to continue, at any rate, for the present. But the Chancellor still had to make a decision on the question of a new tax on profits or increased dividends. This decision, he said with some hint of thunder, would depend on the conduct of private enterprise. He had invited industry to plough back increased profits rather than distribute them to shareholders. "The response has been very patchy," he added, in a tone which the Opposition found frosty.

After this the Opposition heard with apprehension the Chancellor quoting H. G. Wells on inheritance—'No energetic, directive people can be deeply in love with inheritance. It is the fatty degeneration of property.' About 600,000 people died every year, he went on, and one in three left property subject to Estate Duty. The Opposition steeled themselves for the blow. Yet, when it came, it did not, after all carry any great weight. At the higher levels it was indeed to be increased, but at the lower levels the exemption limit was raised. Tension in the Opposition benches slackened.

The Chancellor had left his most extraordinary passage to the end. He had already confessed to a startled House that he had 'a song in his heart.' He now revealed his intention of encouraging the payment of death duties by land in lieu of cash and of creating a National Land Fund of £50,000,000 in order that land might be transferred to such bodies as the National Trust and for the purpose of creating National Parks. And suddenly the song in the Chancellor's heart welled up. 'There is still a wonderful incomparable beauty in Britain,' he pronounced, 'in the sunshine on the hills, in the mist adrift across the moors, the deep peace of the woodlands, and the wash of the waves against the white unconquerable cliffs which Hitler never scaled.'

Members could scarcely believe their ears. Was this the voice of the Treasury? They knew Hugh Dalton for a great Parliamentarian for a University Professor—but for

a poet, never Surely there had been something more inspiring than milk in the silver coffee pot !

Even the sober and cautious Sir John Anderson, who had certainly never winged his Budgets with poetry, seemed stirred by this unusual peroration. The Chancellor, he said, might refer to a song in his heart as he contemplated expanding expenditure in many directions. 'Let me warn him of the real danger—that such cardiac murmurs may be diagnosed in the future, by other doctors, as symptoms of a mortal disease.'

Like Mr Eden, Sir John thought the expenditure, bearing in mind that the Japanese war had ended nine months before, was staggering. It was nearly four times bigger than in 1939. Ralph Assheton (C) gave instances of the way this was done. One and a half million people were still employed on orders for the Supply Departments. There were more men and women engaged in National Government Service than in the whole building and civil engineering industries and more in local government than in the whole of agriculture. This extravagance should be curbed, he said severely. The Government should practise some of the austerity they preached.

'The Chancellor seems to have no respect for economy,' said Brendan Bracken (C). 'We have an inflated Budget, an inflated currency and an inflated Chancellor. He has been having a honeymoon with power. There is no commitment he is not willing to jump at. He is the most prodigal Chancellor in history. We were sent here to keep the public purse. We were not sent here to turn it into a sieve.'

Hugh Dalton put up a solid defence against these assaults. The Government had to have regard to the international situation, to the commitments they had undertaken in connexion with the United Nations organisation and to possible clouds on this or that part of the international horizon. They could not be a party to forcing expenditure on Defence and Supply down too fast or too far until they saw where the world was getting to. But that

was where they intended to pursue economies

The other side of the balance sheet was adversely commented on by both sides. A Conservative estimated that taxation of all kinds was now £67 per head compared with £3 in 1914. Mr Benson (Lab) said that when taxation went up much above 25 per cent trouble followed. We now had a tax level of nearly 40 per cent and since PAYE linked up the day's work with the day's tax and it was only too clear that the less work one did, the less tax one paid. It followed that if it was a case of giving up beer, tobacco or work, the three great tax producers, work was by far the easiest to give up. The result was that the effect of too high a rate of tax was shown in both wages and industry.

David Eccles (C) put the Party view. Conservatives said that inequalities of fortune were a proper reflection of differences in individual ability, application and thirst. To push a tax to a point where a part of a man's income was as good as confiscated was not levying a tax, it was imposing a penalty which ought to be done by a court of law and not by a tax inspector. Socialists said no man could be worth more than a certain income and that income ought to be fixed by politicians. We will never allow that any handful of men has the right to fix the value of their fellow-citizens in terms of money, he declared. Such a power would corrupt angels let alone members of Parliament.

As was to be expected the Opposition had plenty to say about the threat of a new Profits Tax. Colonel Hutchison (C) shrewdly pointed out that so long as the Chancellor assessed a concern by its earning capacity, when fixing compensation in the event of nationalisation businesses were likely to increase their dividends instead of ploughing back. Further if excess dividends were to be taxed there would be a tendency to make hay for the shareholders while the sun shone. A warning also came from the Opposition that high taxation was driving business concerns

to take up a domicile outside the United Kingdom while firms trading overseas were thinking twice about setting up head offices in this country. Not only that but individuals with brains and enterprise were seeking reward for their talent in countries where taxes were not so oppressive. Such individuals said Sir John Anderson should be coaxed and cosseted not cudgeled and cavilled at.

The prospect of keeping Purchase Tax on indefinitely gave rise to a discussion on direct versus indirect taxation. Mr Gordon Walker (Lab) thought that direct taxes curbed initiative and went on to argue that by making things people wanted more difficult to get the Purchase Tax even encouraged it. From this he concluded that it would be socially sound practice to institute a progressive indirect tax—a high tax on high price goods. But Sir Peter Bennett (C.) looked to the day when selling things would not be so easy and if prices remained high because of Purchase Tax people would not be able to buy them. This would lead to unemployment. Nor could Mr Douglas (Lab) welcome a continuation of a tax which by its very nature was inevitably discriminative and arbitrary. For example he could read a book free of tax see it as a play and pay one tax and as a film and pay a higher rate of tax. Major Rerison (L Nat) argued that some goods could be reasonably cheaply produced for export if mass production were got going but this was impossible so long as Purchase Tax restricted demand at home.

There were the usual suggestions for alternative means of raising revenue. Richard Stokes (Lab) was a vigorous advocate for a national land tax—£500 000 000 a year sitting on the doorstep waiting to be picked up. A betting tax also found supporters led by Sir Alan Herbert (Ind) who claimed that he could stop the finest horse in the country by putting half a-crown on it. Betting in his view was a national cancer. The total takings on dogs and horses amounted to something between £400 000 000 and £500 000 000—enough to pay off the American loan in

two or three years. To this suggestion the Chancellor promised consideration, but he confessed that he had not the staff to organise a land tax. If the local authorities could do it, that was another matter.

Though there was nothing stormy about the passage of the Finance Bill to put the Budget into effect, it was at least extraordinarily strenuous. The Committee stage ran for four June days and nights. On the first two days discussion ended at about midnight, but on the third day it soon became clear that both the Government and the Opposition were out to make a night of it. It was a final demonstration by the Opposition before the Recess that highly important national business was being hurried through without adequate discussion. As a mere formality, they requested that the Chairman should "report progress and ask leave to sit again" in time for members to catch their last trains and buses home, but that was easily brushed aside and the House settled down. The Government side had the advantage of a "shift system," whereby so many members could go home early each night, leaving enough behind to uphold the Government in the Lobbies. The Opposition could have no such system and moreover they did most of the talking.

Through the night and into the bleak small hours of the morning amendment after amendment was fully considered with many excursions into the realms of wit and fantasy. The effect of auto suggestion was tried on Mr Dalton. "You are tired," he was told from time to time. "You ought to be in bed." "Not a bit of it," stoutly affirmed the Chancellor. Round about dawn Mrs Leah Manning's mink coat was the centre of an argument about the taxation of skins. At 7 a.m. another move was made to report progress. Oliver Stanley (C), who like the Chancellor, seemed to grow more urbane and witty as the sitting prolonged, sympathised with the three stalwarts holding the bridge on the Government front bench. The Solicitor General though still quite lucid was not quite

as long, he observed. The Chancellor still maintained his humour, but his gestures were not as free and easy as they had been earlier. While the Financial Secretary, notoriously somnolent on these occasions had been awake all the time!

But even towards such blandishments the Chancellor was adamant. He was determined to keep to schedule. So, weary and red eyed, members grimly pursued their task, keeping sleep at bay with a little leg pulling as when a member furthered his case for removing the Purchase Tax from wigs by pointing to the Chancellor's shining bald head. Finally, Oliver Stanley drew the attention of the House to the approach of the sacred hour of 11 a.m. 'Coffee and buns are calling,' he announced. And to that call even the Chancellor had to yield.

Even so, they were back in Committee in the afternoon and sat again until nearly four the next morning, thus completing 38 hours in two sittings, a record in recent times. As the Chancellor made concessions in Purchase Tax adding up to more than £2,000,000 it was not entirely unrewarding.

Subsequently the Bill passed its Third Reading without a division in an atmosphere of mutual congratulation. To the Opposition it was inclined to err on the side of optimism and to envisage without real warrant a maintenance of the high level of national income. To Government supporters it seemed in some ways pedestrian and too much akin to the orthodox Conservative Budget for the first full dress Socialist Budget. But both sides could for different reasons agree with Oliver Stanley when he guessed that the song in the Chancellor's heart was 'Pennies from Heaven,' since seldom in Budgetary history had one man given so little to so many!

## CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

### THE GIANT DISEASE

*When this scheme is carried out it will place this country in the forefront of all countries in the world in medical services —Aneurin Bevan*

*It may well become a utility scheme with a utility service under which doctors will sign and certify more and more and cure less and less —Sir Henry Morris Jones*

THE success of any plan for social insurance rests, according to Lord Beveridge, on three assumptions. First, that unemployment should never rise above 8½ per cent of the insured population, second, that family allowances should be paid, and third, that there should be a national health service. The spectre of mass unemployment must always haunt any country whose industrialisation has approached saturation point, and it remains to be seen whether this country, whatever the political complexion of its Government, will be able to solve a problem which has so far baffled all countries in a similar position to our own. Much has already been done, in the distribution of industry, the resettlement and training schemes and the various financial measures to control purchasing power and investment, to approach a solution, but time and the vagaries of the outside world will have their say before success can be claimed. Family allowances, the second assumption had already been realised and it now remained for Aneurin Bevan, the Minister of Health, to encompass the third.

By one of those odd consistencies that reinforce the political history of Britain the vast structure of the social services that has been built up in the last two years is now in the hands of two Welshmen, the heirs of the great Welsh pioneer in social legislation, David Lloyd George. But whereas James Griffiths took the Coalition national insurance scheme and carried it through in substantially

the same form Aneurin Bevan swept the board clean of previous ideas and started afresh. The end remained the same but the means were very different.

The universal health service involved a general practitioner and specialist service general and special hospital treatment maternity and child welfare clinics eye and dental treatment spectacles and deaf aids and so on to be provided free to all persons insured under the National Insurance Act. Free meant of course without any payment additional to the 10d a week included in the national insurance contribution the balance coming from the Exchequer (or the general taxpayer) and the local authorities (or the ratepayer).

Three main instruments were chosen by the Minister to carry out this service. These were the hospitals the general practitioners and the health centres. When he came to examine the first of these instruments Mr Bevan found a hospital organisation which had grown up without plan or system. It was unevenly distributed over the country and very often the best facilities were provided where they were least needed. Many of the hospitals were too small, 70 per cent having less than 100 beds and over 30 per cent having less than 30. Nobody can pretend that hospitals so small can provide general hospital treatment. Although I am not myself a devotee of bigness for bigness sake I would rather be kept alive in the efficient if cold altruism of a large hospital than expire in a gush of sympathy in a small one.

Hospitals fell into two main categories the voluntary and the municipal. He was aware that the voluntary hospitals had a long history of devotion and sacrifice behind them but they had been established often by the caprice of private charity. They bore no relation to one another. Two hospitals close together often tried to provide the same specialist services unnecessarily while other areas had not that kind of specialist service at all. Nor when the health service was set up and something like

90 per cent of their revenue came from public funds, could these hospitals be called "voluntary." The position of the local government hospitals was little better. Many of them were too poor or too small to exercise their hospital powers. Furthermore, they had inherited their hospitals from the Poor Law and some of them were "monstrous buildings, a cross between a workhouse and a barracks."

The general proposition was that a proper hospital unit should comprise about 1,000 beds which could be provided by pooling and linking together a number of hospitals. The necessary organisation and co-ordination could not be carried through if the hospitals remained under independent management or if the local authority in any particular area could not meet the cost. The only course open to a Minister known for boldness and originality was to create an entirely new service, and this, to Mr. Bevan, meant taking over both the voluntary and the local government hospitals and welding them into a single service.

The method was outlined in the National Health Service Bill, debated in April. Hospital units, each associated with a medical school, were to be created in about 16 to 20 regions. These were to be administered by regional boards at the top, appointed by the Minister after consultation with all concerned. The regional boards, in their turn, would appoint local hospital management committees for each large hospital or group of hospitals, and the management committees themselves would have the option of setting up small house committees for individual hospitals. Planning and overall administration of their regions was the prerogative of the boards, while the day-to-day management of the hospitals under their care was left in the hands of the management committees.

Having disposed of the bricks and mortar, Mr. Bevan now turned to his human material, the general practitioners. Tempering boldness with caution, though without betraying his own nature by any hint of appeasement, the Minister planned to achieve his desire without affronting unduly

the independent spirit of the profession. He had had plenty of warning that doctors would not consent to become state servants. He therefore proposed to set up local executive councils in each county and county borough. Half of the membership of these councils was to be professional and appointed by the profession itself. To enter the public service all the doctor had to do was to put himself on the list of the council. If he chose to be independent, he could remain outside.

Once on the list for public service the doctor was to be given a basic salary plus a capitation fee. The basic salary was proposed chiefly in order that a young doctor entering practice for the first time could live while he was building up his lists. There was also the advantage that it could be increased to get doctors to go into the unattractive areas. This latter was one of the Minister's methods of overcoming the existing uneven distribution of doctors throughout the country. Another method was applied through the executive councils in conjunction with another new body the Medical Practices Committee which would have to hand all the necessary information about the distribution of doctors throughout the country. A doctor wishing to practise in any particular district would apply to the local executive council who would forward his application to the Medical Practices Committee. If there was room for another doctor in that district they would so advise the council who would put him on their list. But if it was over-doctored he would have to try elsewhere.

under the local authorities

Although there was nobody in the House or out of it who did not want a comprehensive medical service the Bevan version evoked considerable opposition not only from the Conservatives but from the British Medical Association the Royal Societies and other outside bodies Many funeral orations were solemnly pronounced by the Tories over their own scheme so summarily slain by the Welshman from Ebbw Vale They would have restricted the regional boards to planning only, leaving the hospitals existing or to be created voluntary or municipal free to carry out the plan

The odour of nationalisation offending their nostrils the Opposition made some effort to convince the Government that the hospitals were not fitted for State ownership Richard Law (C) conceded that there were defects in the system but there was not one of them which was not due to lack of finance and once it was accepted that the community would pay for a comprehensive service that difficulty disappeared As it was by taking the hospitals away from the local authorities the Government was tearing the heart out of their services objected Sir Harold Webbe (C) of the LCC It left them emasculated truncated deformed and completely open to future attacks on their autonomy Alderman Fred Messer (Lab) evidently felt the same doubts and suggested that there were two types of social service—those which affected people in the mass like water supply and those which affected individuals like education and health It did not much matter who supplied the water but the personal services were best carried out by at least a locally elected body Where was the Minister's faith in the elective principle? How could he decide whom to appoint to the regional boards from a mere list of names presented to him? This was surely a case for an elected representative body

Mr Key the Parliamentary Secretary himself an Alderman staunchly defended the scheme Every hospital or

hospital unit would have its committee of management, he said. They would not be black-hearted, black-hatted bureaucrats from Whitehall. They would be appointed by the regional boards after consultation with the local health authorities the local executive councils in charge of the G P service, the voluntary hospitals and the senior staffs of the hospitals. "You could hardly have a more local body than that," he observed.

In fact, objections to the main structure of the Bill were weak and it was only when some of its implications were tracked down that temperatures began to rise. In taking over the voluntary hospitals, for instance, the Minister also took over their endowments to the tune of £32,000,000. This was designated a "very carefully prepared measure of highway robbery". One member remarked that mercy and compassion were Christian virtues and added "You can't delegate your conscience to a Minister—even if he is a Welshman". But Clem Davies (L) pointed out that a germ could not distinguish between a voluntary and a municipal hospital. Nor did he think the doctors or the nurses were better, or that there was more humanity, in a hospital that depended on money begged in the streets and not paid by the Government.

With his intransigence and boundless Parliamentary ability, Mr Bevan managed to place his opponents into the romantic but feckless position of pleading lost causes. These endowments, he explained, were not being confiscated they were merely being redistributed over the whole hospital system. In any case a large proportion of them were diversions from the Chancellor of the Exchequer by Surtax payers—filibustering philanthropists, was one member's epithet—and therefore the Chancellor of the Exchequer was the chief contributor.

"Is the intelligent planning of the modern world to be prevented by the endowments of the dead? I believe it is repugnant to a civilised community for hospitals to have to rely on private charity. I believe we ought to have left

hospital flag days behind. The only voluntary part of the hospital service destroyed by the Bill is the necessity to sell flags and collect money. It is well established that one of the chief qualifications of some of the ornaments of the medical profession is their ability to attract money to the hospitals from rich individuals."

This 'home truth' method of argument was one that stood the Minister in good stead all through the Bill. He used it again in meeting attacks on his proposal to abolish the purchase and sale of practices. 'It is tantamount to the sale and purchase of patients,' he said. 'Indeed, every argument advanced about the value of the practice is in itself an argument against freedom of choice, because the assumption underlying the high value of a practice is that the patient passes from the old doctor to the new. If they did not pass, there would be no value to it.' This was a good example of hitting two heads with one blow. Again why should a young doctor, after qualifying for six years have to seek the assistance of the usurer before he could practise? That, he added ironically, was what the Opposition called 'a sense of adventure in medicine.'

Mr Key, who like his chief, had been spoiling for a fight but had found little to bite on, asked what right a doctor would have to sell a definite income guaranteed from national funds. If it was right for doctors, why not for medical officers of health, school teachers and sanitary inspectors? He used a similar argument to dispose of the charge that the method of appointing doctors amounted to direction. Who had the right to participate in a particular section of the public service in an area of their own choice? Could a schoolmaster demand as of right, a post in a certain school? If a dustman could not find a job with a particular local authority because there was no vacancy, did he howl about being subject to bureaucratic direction because he had to go and seek work elsewhere?

The case for and against the method of remunerating doctors was better balanced. The Opposition insisted that

he doctor's only loyalty and only responsibility should be to his patient, but under this system he would depend for his prospects of material advancement, not on the service he could render his patient, but on the impression he was able to make on his administrative superiors.

From this a discussion arose on the attitude of doctors to their profession. Opposition doctors were deliberately unsentimental. "Doctors and dentists are not sacrosanct," declared Sir Henry Morris-Jones (L. Nat.). "Many of them come into the profession on economic grounds. Even a clergyman, when he takes a living, makes a calculation of what he is likely to get out of marriages and out of funerals as well." Sir John Graham Kerr (C.) thought that a large number of potential recruits to the profession would seek other careers or go overseas where there was more scope, and in this he was supported by Sir Ernest Graham-Little (Ind.) who alleged that the Dominions office was overwhelmed by applications from demobilised young doctors to leave this country. His prophecy was that the scheme would founder for lack of doctors, as experience with similar systems in other countries had shown. More idealistic Socialists, among them Anthony Greenwood, could not understand this slur on a great profession. It seemed to suggest that a surgeon would perform a better operation for 20 than for five guineas.

On the text "You can't cure a man by a committee or a board," the Opposition attempted to prove that this was the beginning of a whole-time State-salaried service. J. S. C. Reid (C.) urged that medicine was an art and that it did not take kindly to regimentation. Progress in the past had depended to a very large extent on individuals or small groups of men—men who very often would never fit comfortably into any regimented system. "We have to rely on men of that kind for future progress also," he added. "We should beware lest we lose the substance of the human spirit for the shadow of administrative efficiency."

On these questions Mr. Bevan adopted a "two-eyed

stance" To his supporters he explained that the medical profession was not yet "ripe" for a full salaried service To his opponents he replied that under this scheme doctors did not become 'little civil servants in a huge bureaucracy' Instead they were under contract with bodies which were ever open to their own influence and control But Mr Key probably gave the real clue to this compromise when he admitted that a full salaried service would be inconsistent with the free choice of doctor A large salary could not be paid irrespective of the work done and the only fair method would have been the compulsory distribution of patients among doctors

Freedom of choice also entered into the decision to allow doctors and specialists to take fee paying patients Miss Alice Bacon (Lab) based her objection to this on psychological grounds 'Why should anyone pay when everyone could get the service free?' she asked 'It's impossible to legislate for snobbishness,' protested Mr Bevan But Miss Bacon was convinced that confidence in the scheme would be shaken if patients could obtain or believed they could obtain, better service by paying a fee Mr Ungoed Thomas (Lab) claimed this was serving both God and Mammon There was scriptural authority for winking at minor transgressions, but this was not winking it was Willinking' Unshaken even by such a pun, Mr Bevan still did not see why a patient should not be free to try a doctor other than his own If he was a better doctor, all he would need to do to avoid paying further fees would be to transfer to his list and get him free Moreover, unless specialists were allowed fee paying patients there might be a rash of nursing homes and many specialists would be lost to the public hospitals

The Bill emerged from all its stages in the Commons substantially unamended— as it was intended it should It still had to face the expert scrutiny of high professional authorities in the Lords but the Government were confident it would survive intact Like most major Acts—and

the Education Act is a good example—it will take several years before the system it establishes will be in full working order and an even longer period for its general effect on the health of the people to be assessed. Meanwhile it was but a skeleton. As Dr Clitherow (Lab.) said 'The master brain controlling the nervous system is in place, in a skull well protected by the hard, bony majority possessed in this House, the nerve tracks are in position to move the future muscles and coverings, which will be supplied at a later date by Regulations, the intestines are ready to digest, absorb and reject whatever may be offered."

## CHAPTER NINETEEN

### SPEEDING THE PLOUGH

*The country is not sufficiently "soil minded" — Earl Winterton*

ONE of the most surprising features of the General Election was the large number of rural constituencies where Labour had long been inarticulate which returned a Socialist candidate. In the result agriculturists were as frequent on the Government as on the Conservative benches a most unusual and significant state of affairs. However it soon became evident that all were farmers first and politicians afterwards and that the Government policy was to be judged from the practical standpoint of good husbandry rather than by the touchstone of political theory.

This was evident in the general welcome accorded to the Government's long term policy which was announced by Tom Williams the Minister of Agriculture in November. Spare and bony to the point of the cadaverous Tom Williams hardly appears the apostle of plenty and even if he had posed as one the House would never have believed him in the face of the critical world food situation. His policy was based on a system of assured markets and guaranteed prices. County committees similar to the War Agricultural Executives were to be set up permanently and these would work in association with a National Advisory Service. In return for these benefits the farmers were to submit to a certain measure of control to secure that the land was efficiently farmed and also to compulsory directions when necessary in the national interest.

There was so little to cavil at in this policy that neither in this debate nor in a later one in April was much time devoted to discussing it. There were more immediate problems and outstanding among them was the problem of arresting the drift from the land which had continued

steadily since the nineties and was now thrown into prominence by the urgency of increasing home production to meet world food shortages. Farmers could not depend for long on the labour of prisoners of war. The Women's Land Army, denied a gratuity, had fallen from 60,000 to 30,000 and at the time of the April debate recruiting had only brought in 8,000. In 1945, over 27,000 of the farm workers were over 65 and they could not be expected to go on much longer. Out of 35,000 farm workers in the Forces offered release under Class B, slightly fewer than one in two were accepting and not many more than 2,000 were expected to emerge from the Government training scheme.

There was no difficulty in finding the reasons for this reluctance to work on the land. All were agreed, for instance, that poor accommodation and lack of amenities in the countryside were an adverse factor. Colonel Clarke (C.) could not blame any young man or woman deciding there was "no future in it" when they faced the prospect of getting at 18 a full agricultural wage which they might still be getting at 70. The chances of promotion compared with those in other walks of life were very few. His suggestion was a recognised ladder of promotion, starting with a pre-agricultural course, passing on to young farmers' clubs and a period of work on a farm or market garden. The next rung would be joining a group settlement or a land settlement estate followed by a small holding or small tenant farming.

To George Jeger (Lab.) it was a simple matter of pounds, shillings and pence. What inducement was there to a man to go into an industry in which, after training, he would receive wages less than he had received when he was being trained and in which he would be better off if he was disabled and in receipt of a disability pension than if he were well and earning a full week's wage?

Not only were the wages lower for the skilled man in agriculture than for the unskilled man in other industries, many speakers pointed out 'but the stability of his wages

was linked up with the policy of cheap food *via* subsidy. Col Thornton-Kemsley (C) put it that the stability of farm wages depended upon the willingness of the taxpayer—of whom about nine in ten lived in towns—to go on paying a subsidy to the home producer of the order of £158,000,000 a year. 'Sooner or later the Chancellor will kick,' commented Rob Hudson (C). 'Why should the rest of the country, whose wages are based on the present cost of living index, be entitled to live on the backs of the low paid agricultural workers?' There was the dilemma. If food subsidies were reduced, the price of food would have to go up. If the price went up, then the general cost of living went up and all the other industries which had their wages based on the cost of living would put their wages up and in the end everything would be exactly where it started. The same would apply if the farmer made better prices for his produce a condition of raising the wages of his workers.

Various ways out of this dilemma were explored. The general Tory view was that the price paid for food should gradually be brought into closer relationship with the cost of production. Mr Baldwin (C) noted that out of every pound spent on consumable goods 10s 8d went on food and 9s 4d on drink and tobacco. He did not think it would hurt consumers to spend a little more on food and a little less on drink and tobacco. Col Thornton Kemsley's view was that the farm wage should be related to agricultural prices and fixed at the annual price review, with an agreed minimum wage and, as soon as practicable, a graded system with adequate recognition for special skill and responsibilities.

Socialists saw possibilities of enhanced wages in increased mechanisation with fewer men producing more food, while Mr Paget (Lab.) made the interesting suggestion that the Minister should ask the farmers to increase farm wages and offer in return to use the influence of the Government not only in seeing that what they granted remained a relative gain as against their competitors in the labour market, but

also in persuading the T U C to see that the concession by the farmers should not be used as in the past, as an argument for advancing wages elsewhere. Nor should it be used as an argument by the local authorities for putting the local roadman up to 2s above the agricultural worker's gain.

These arguments were listened to with sympathy on the Government bench, but beyond agreeing that the consumer should at the earliest possible moment pay the full value of the food produced at home, they had no firm assurance about how it could be done without upsetting the delicate balance of subsidy, cost of living and wages.

But the drift from the land and the farm worker's wage were both perennial problems and the Government could hardly be reproached for their failure to solve them immediately when they were already preoccupied in the grim struggle for bread itself. Even the long term policy had to be pushed into the background as the successive food crises forced the Government to take step after step in which short term necessity had precedence over long term advantage. So much was this apparent that in June Rob Hudson told the Government that what was bothering farmers was not a long term or a short term policy, what they wanted was a consistent policy. Since January the Food Minister had twice raised the flour extraction rate with a consequent loss of 600 000 tons of feedingstuffs and there were to be successive cuts in the pig and poultry rations. The effect would be a cut in the egg and bacon ration for the winter and a loss of 100 000 000 gallons of milk during the seven winter months—a hardship which would fall entirely on the non priority customer.

Having painted this gloomy picture Mr Hudson then showed how in his submission it could have been avoided. The Treasury had agreed to buy—for dollars—70 000 tons of dried milk from the United States. The equivalent in fresh milk was 33 000 000 gallons. For the same amount of dollars the Government could have bought sufficient

maize from the Argentine to feed to cattle to provide 66 000 000 gallons of milk in this country

It would take at least five years he summed up to repair the damage that would be done in the next six months—and all for so little. This point was stressed by Robert Boothby (C) who said that the fertility of our soil had greatly deteriorated through over production of cereals during the past six years. We were not a wheat producing country. Never was there a moment in the history of British agriculture when the replenishment of our herds with good stock was more necessary. What are we doing about it? he asked. We are killing off our livestock and proposing to buy abroad out of our limited dollar resources tinned milk butter meat and eggs at a cost four times greater than the cost of the raw materials needed to produce these commodities ourselves.

Against this attack Tom Williams maintained his quiet, unhurried demeanour. He noted that Mr Hudson had appeared remarkably cheerful for one so gloomy in his prophecies and these two old colleagues smiled at each other across the House in complete understanding of the position—the one under a duty to oppose and the other to find a way out of difficulties not of his own making. The Government Mr Williams assured the House were doing their best but there was no escaping the fact that the shortage of feedingstuffs was part of the world food shortage. In importing countries at least animals had to take second place when it was a question of keeping people alive in certain parts of the world. They had buying missions in all the main exporting countries but they could not compel people to sell to them.

He did not disguise that the position was bad. There was a 40 per cent cut on the feedingstuffs that were required to maintain the ration in the last winter and a fall in the milk supply was inevitable though he did not believe it would be catastrophic. The cut in the commercial pig and poultry ration would bring them back to the hardest days of the

war in 1943 and there would be a loss of eggs and pig meat—in fact supplies of the latter would be reduced to the lowest level in wartime.

He finally drove home his point by turning the eyes of the House to the position in countries abroad. Most of the Western European countries already had bread rationing. There had been a 50 per cent fall in feeding stuffs in North West Europe. Denmark were in much the same position as ourselves, but Belgium and Holland were worse. As for poultry, in Western Europe as a whole, the poultry population was down to between 30 and 60 per cent. of its pre war numbers, compared with 80 per cent here.

After such a statement, the country could but count its blessings and, as Mr Snadden (C) said "The farmers will do their duty. They will go into khaki again along with the loaf."

## CHAPTER TWENTY

### 'THE WHOLE WORLD IS IN TROUBLE'

*If we do not want to have total war we must have total peace —Ernest Bevin*

ON June 4 the House held the first full dress debate on foreign affairs since February. In that long interval many members had paid official and unofficial visits to all parts of Europe. They had been to France, Poland, Germany, Austria, Greece, Hungary and even as far afield as Persia. Very few of them had liked what they had seen and told the House so in such downright terms as to earn a rebuke from the Prime Minister who suggested that some of them saw only what they wanted to see—particularly those who saw everything through Russian spectacles.

Their complaints at all events beat without avail about the head of the Foreign Secretary. I know he seemed to say It is easy to find grievances but if you listen to what I have to say you will realise it is not so easy to put them right. So they listened. They listened to his account of the meeting of Foreign Ministers in Paris. They listened to his struggle against Mr Molotov's reiterated No! They heard how one deserving proposal after another was blocked by this unremitting negative. And as they listened they thought with Mr Butler that the high office of Foreign Secretary was these days more of a penance than a privilege. Even when Mr Bevin shortened the sights of his foreign policy from world economic reconstruction to ultimate reliance on the United Nations organisation they passed it by without a murmur.

One after another Mr Bevin paraded his defeated hopes before a crowded and grimly attentive House. He had proposed a provisional International Commission to go into the question of opening up the Danube. Mr Molotov would not accept it. That meant that through traffic on

one of the main transport arteries between Central and South Eastern Europe was paralysed and whole areas of Europe were to go hungry Mr Bevin flushed angrily as he recalled this "Let us fight on some other basis," he declared "This political conflict should not take place on the bellies of the people"

Then Mr Byrnes suggested that the Danube should be free to all States on terms of perfect equality No progress could be made on these lines either In fact, Mr Molotov stated publicly that it was wrong for 'certain non Danube States' to assume the right to dictate their will to the Danube States 'I resent that attitude,' said Mr Bevin 'We have not sought to dictate It is not dictating, nor is it an unfriendly act, to put forward a proposal with which somebody else doesn't agree'

On the question of the Italo-Jugoslav frontier, America, France and Britain were ready to accept a line which would give Jugoslavia by far the greater part of the disputed area, whilst leaving approximately equal numbers of Italians and Jugoslavs under alien rule The Russians recommended that the whole area should go to Jugoslavia—which would leave no Slav speaking people with Italy, at the expense of leaving over half a million Italians in Jugoslavia The Americans and the British offered a compromise but there was no move on the part of Russia to meet them

Until this frontier question was settled Russia refused to discuss Trieste, although it had been unanimously agreed in London that it should be an international port She also refused to discuss Austria, although a peace treaty with Austria would do away with the need for keeping any Allied troops either in the Danube basin or in North Italy Mr Molotov seemed to abandon too the decision to withdraw troops from Bulgaria after the peace treaty on the ill founded argument that the Soviet lines of communication had to be maintained by means of the Danube, which was, for part of its course, the frontier of Bulgaria That meant Russian troops in Bulgaria as well as Rumania and Hungary

They were to meet again in Paris and, so far as he could see there was nothing wrong with the proposal that in the event of this Council failing to reach agreement, the 21 nations who had actively engaged in the fighting should be called into conference. Had the four Powers any moral right to say to these nations "You must go on in a state of war for ever, because we four gentlemen cannot agree"? Well there it rested. Mr Bevin heaved a ponderous sigh "I cannot promise success at the next conference," he said "But I will do my best, in the interests of the common people, to deserve it."

In the general debate the problem of Germany exercised the minds of many speakers. The Government were urged to revise the Potsdam agreement and abandon the madness of de-industrialising Germany. It was impossible to pursue a policy of keeping a country down and at the same time a policy of trying to build it up said Michael Foot (Lab). On this issue Mr Churchill had something to say "We must strive to redeem and reincorporate the German and Japanese peoples into a world system of free and civilised democracy. The idea of keeping scores of millions of people hanging about in a subhuman state between earth and hell, until they are worn down to slave condition, or embrace Communism or die off from hunger, will only breed at least a moral pestilence and probably an actual war. The danger to peace is not at present Germany—the danger is the confusion and degeneration into which a very large part of Europe is sinking."

To all such criticism the Government could only reply that they were working for a federal Germany, to be treated as an economic whole. Nevertheless Conservatives still pressed for something more concrete in the way of bringing the Western European nations together. Mr Butler wanted something in the nature of a "co-operative society" among them and Robert Boothby again appealed for a Western Federal Union. Mr Molotov had gone ahead with his Eastern Federal Union. 150 000,000 people had been added

to the Soviet system in 12 months which was not bad going by any standards

The travellers also told their tales Mr Wadsworth (L.) had been to Hungary and urged the Great Powers to impose a federation on the Danubian States So had Flight Lieutenant Haire (Lab) and he had found inflation and starvation—lifeless bones walking the streets Two members had returned from Persia very indignant at the Russo Persian Treaty which seemed to be the result of pressure brought to bear by a Great Power on a small country They must have left their Russian spectacles behind

But the main feature of the debate as of all the foreign policy debates was concern over Russia and her propaganda against the Western Powers Mr Churchill marched into the attack with gusto He noted that there were two expressions in common use The first was the word bloc To be on good easy sympathetic terms with your neighbours was to form a bloc This was a crime according to every Communist in the land unless it be a Communist bloc It happened also that we were closely associated with the United States This was to be condemned and ruled out by the expression ganging up and it must not be done

Winston Churchill then embarked on a series of warnings His first was addressed to the Soviet Union The unfriendly Soviet propaganda was having the reverse effect to what was intended in Canada and the United States It cannot be in the interest of Russia to go on irritating the United States he said The American eagle sits on his perch a large strong bird with formidable beak and claws There he sits motionless and the Russian Ambassador is sent day after day to prod him with a sharp pointed stick All the time the eagle keeps quite still But it would be a mistake to suppose that nothing is going on inside the breast of the eagle Even here in our patient community Soviet propaganda has been steadily making headway backwards But it was for his last warning that Mr Churchill reserved

his most portentous tone. He referred to the curtain that had descended from the Baltic to the Adriatic, behind which was a broad band of territory containing nearly one-third of the population of Europe. "It is here," he said, "here in this great band or belt, if anywhere, that the seeds of a new world war are being sown."

It fell to the Prime Minister to follow this clap of Churchillian thunder. His brow was puckered and his manner hesitant, as if it needed but a little for him to lean over the Speaker's table and say: "Steady, now, steady. There are limits, you know." And this, indirectly and very skilfully was what, in effect, he did say. He explained that it was difficult to make a Russian understand the way we worked things in Western democracies. It was hard to make them understand that there was more than one voice in this country: "If someone makes a speech, although he is an impeccable Conservative and is attacking the Government as strongly as possible, it tends to be taken in Russia in some mysterious way as the voice of the Government. That is really what is called the iron curtain. It is a curtain between minds." Like so many of Mr. Attlee's scoring strokes, it was a corkscrew thrust. The more it revolved in the mind, the deeper it went.

But it was upon the Foreign Secretary that the responsibility of dealing with the Russian fell and it was his recurring duty publicly to repudiate Soviet propaganda that brought him bouquets from the Opposition and brickbats from the extreme Left Wing of his own Party. The line he took on this occasion was shrewdly calculated to open the eyes of his Socialist critics to some pertinent home truths, while at the same time avoiding irritation in the Kremlin.

He observed that running through all the speeches and writings of our Soviet friends was the theory that they alone represented the workers and they alone were democratic. Their conception of certain other Governments was that they were either Fascist or crypto-Fascist or something of

the sort. This led to the idea that the security of Russia could only be maintained when every other country in the world had adopted the Russian system.

I am sure I can speak for the workers in Great Britain and the British Commonwealth when I say that we don't believe that the Soviet system would represent the interests of the workers in Great Britain and the British Commonwealth nearly so effectively as the system which this Socialist democratic Parliament is now evolving in this country. I don't for a moment deny the right of Russia to pursue her own way of achieving an industrial revolution but it would not represent progress and would really be retrogressive for us in this country who started our industrial revolution over 150 years ago to adopt the Russian method. I have the impression that the majority of the working classes in Europe feel like us.

But the members upon whom he hoped to prevail by this fresh perspective had a surprise of their own up their sleeves. On the second day of the debate as if detonated by Mr Churchill's warning to Russia a counter blast against America herself blew up. Seymour Cocks (Lab) led off by commenting on Russia's feeling that unless America ceased to be capitalist she would one day be forced by economic circumstances to attack Russia. These economic circumstances were more fully explained by Mr Horabin (L). There were powerful pressure groups in America he said who were dominated by a fear of the uprising of the American masses which they believed they could only avoid by achieving full employment. Under the American system the only way of achieving this was by exporting unemployment abroad in a policy of ruthless economic imperialism. This Dollar Imperialism was further illustrated by Mr Warbey (Lab) when he charged Mr Bevin with over simplifying the Danubian issue. What Mr Byrnes had asked for was not merely freedom of shipping along the Danube but freedom for the American business man to get a hold on the internal economy indus-

try trade and raw materials of the Danubian countries

This part of the argument was summed up by Mr Paget (Lab.), looking through not only Russian, but Marxist spectacles. The Russian he said, saw in America a country with vast industrial strength guided by two barely distinguishable parties, which were both, at bottom, corrupt. They saw also that grave economic crisis faced the American people. To a Marxist Russian such a situation would inevitably precipitate some American demagogue, who would establish himself as a revolutionary dictator in America and find his way out of the economic problem by a foreign war.

Having established their premises, this group of critics proceeded to draw some equally alarming conclusions. Mr Warbey pointed to the closed strategic system already established on the American continent—and still the American security zones were spreading. Was it not the logical outcome that we ourselves were destined to be included in them as 'the frontier outpost against Communism' and that, with a division of the world into two vast blocs we should get the first blows—and they would probably be the last—in the likely event of war? That was why said Mr Horabin although they regarded America as the real enemy, the Russians reserved their most bitter hatred for Britain. They saw Britain tied to America hand and foot and ready to allow America to go into all her world bases overnight if it was a case of war with Russia.

These critics certainly had a field day but as a diversionary attack it was not very effective because at the time it was launched there were not many in the Chamber to be diverted. Members began to come in later for the closing speeches and listening to Richard Law (C) quietly putting forward the comparatively innocuous suggestion that Russian suspicion was no pathological state but rather a deliberate instrument of policy they heard nothing to suggest that the argument had departed from the customary groove.

Nor was there any clue to this outburst when the House succumbed to the spell of the quiet compelling sincerity of Hector McNeil, the Under Secretary. It had been a debate of second thoughts, he said. In the heat of war concessions and bargains were made which in peace, when prestige, long term security and trade began to point their complex and conflicting conclusions seemed markedly less attractive. But it was the policy of the Government to keep their word and discharge their promissory notes. The Soviet credit which was disappearing in this country was not disappearing because of anything said by the Government—or even by Mr Churchill. Mr Bevin would try and secure agreement with Soviet Russia but he would not do it by appeasement. One appeasement in any generation is one too many."

## CHAPTER TWENTY ONE

# THE FLOODTIDE OF NATIONALISM

*I don't think the Poona mentality suits to-day — Ernest Bevin*

THE alarming paradox of peace has been that, at a time when the Governments of the world were pressing forward with new forms of international organisations in almost all nations there should be a powerful upsurge of nationalism. This was brought sharply home to the Government by their problems in Egypt and Palestine. In Egypt the story went back to 1936 when the Anglo Egyptian Treaty was signed for a period of 20 years with a provision for revision in 10 years. The main feature of this Treaty was the defence of the Suez Canal and the Egyptian Government agreed that until their own forces were strong enough to undertake the defence of the Canal Zone it should be done by British troops.

The war safely over, the continued presence of British troops in Egypt led to an outburst of national feeling and in December the Egyptian Government demanded their complete evacuation. There was growing agitation and in February during a series of attacks on British military and civil property our troops were compelled to fire in self defence. To clear up this situation and to consider the revision of the Treaty Lord Stansgate the Air Minister arrived in Cairo and announced the British intention to withdraw all their armed forces from Egyptian territory.

This brought the first and only clash on foreign policy between the Government and the Opposition. When the offer of withdrawal was announced in the House signs of the approaching storm were visible on Mr Churchill's countenance when he rose to move the adjournment of the House 'to discuss a definite matter of urgent public importance'. Two debates followed one another in rapid

succession

In the first Mr Attlee was not on his best form. He placed the Government's action against the background of rising national sentiment and suspicion in Egypt. The Egyptians did not consider they had complete freedom and independence so long as foreign troops were retained even by Treaty on their soil.

Suspicion! snorted Mr Churchill. Egypt was saved by the armies of the British Empire from all the horrors which have wracked the whole of Europe and large parts of Asia—and at the end we are assured that a large debt of money—£400 000 000—is due from this country to Egypt for the supplies we purchased locally to feed the armies which were successfully defending the soil of the Delta. Gratitude not suspicion is the only sentiment becoming to the Egyptian Government.

Uneasily Mr Attlee fell back on the support of the Chiefs of Staff. They had he said agreed that this was the best method of approach. But this did not satisfy Mr Churchill. Chiefs of Staff were not the judges of diplomatic methods of approach. The Dominions too had agreed with Mr Attlee and Mr Churchill wanted to know whether they had been consulted before the decision was taken. Of course replied Mr Attlee and Mr Churchill shook his head. The right honourable gentleman shakes his head snapped Mr Attlee. He was not there. Loud cheers from the Government benches accompanied this tetchy exchange but the Prime Minister later had to explain that the word agreed was capable of misinterpretation. The Dominions were not called upon to agree in a matter which was entirely a British responsibility and they were not committed in any way.

Ably supported by Mr Eden Winston Churchill put up a formidable case against this action of the Government. He did not go quite so far as some of his supporters who talked of all this scuttle and run and even of unbuttoning the Empire but he was much disturbed by the political and

strategic consequences of what he regarded as "beginning negotiations by giving away the main point." For this battle Mr Attlee called upon his strongest advocates. On the first occasion Herbert Morrison was brought in to goad the old warrior with some of his steely banter. What Mr Churchill forgot, he said, was that 1946 in Egypt was not 1936 and it was not 1929. "It may be awkward, but the world has a habit of moving on. Mr. Churchill cannot denounce us for not demobilising in a peaceful world and then urge us into policies which would create the reverse."

What would have been the result if we had refused to withdraw our troops, as requested? The negotiations would have broken down, there would have been riots and the Egyptian Government might not have been able to deal with civil disturbances. The British would probably be attacked and forced to defend themselves, thus putting us logically on the road to military occupation of the country.

Mr Churchill, returning to the attack in the second debate, agreed with some of the doubts that had been expressed about our ability to keep the Canal open in the air age, even if we had fighter aircraft in the Zone, but at any rate without British forces there, there was no chance of keeping it open whatsoever.

What were the alternative methods of protecting the Zone? A jumping off ground in South Palestine? If we tried that, hope of gaining the aid of the United States on the Palestine question would be seriously prejudiced. Perhaps we might get the trusteeship of Cyrenaica and establish a jumping off ground there. If we did that we should throw away our grand position of seeking nothing for ourselves, except honour, out of the war. We would become immediately an interested party, seeking new bases in lands not ours, and we should immediately be represented as a greedy, grasping nation playing at power politics and demanding territories formerly owned by others for the sake of our designs on Egypt. Russia would certainly renew or reinforce her demand for bases in the

## Eastern Mediterranean

But neither jumping off place would be effective. If an emergency arose, we should be in dispute with a Great Power, which would, of course, say to the Egyptian Government, "We should regard any movement of British troops into the Canal Zone as an unfriendly act." Could anyone suppose that the Egyptian Government, confronted with this situation and not desiring anyhow to have British forces in the Zone, would not refuse permission for us to re-enter?

The final speech came from Mr Bevin, who gave a very impressive performance, managing to meet the Opposition arguments in a manner which delighted his own back-benchers, while at the same time offering substantial reassurances. First he asked why there was any reference at all to revision in the 1936 Treaty. The only thing in it to revise was the clause about troops in the Canal Zone. Actually the Treaty was made at or about the time of the Italian war against Abyssinia, when the black shadow of war was hanging over the world. Under those circumstances it was natural that the Egyptian Government should concede the retention of British troops in Egypt. But the assumption surely was that when the threat of war passed it was right for both parties to review the situation.

In the meantime, there had been the development of the United Nations organisation in which all these countries, great and small, felt they had a new status. They assumed that through the organisation there was to be a new era of regional defence and that their great salvation lay in that, rather than in supporting one State solely. He had a great hope of seeing the Middle East working together as a whole in a great comradeship with the United Kingdom and the rest of the Commonwealth and ultimately woven into the regional defence as provided for within the United Nations.

"I have to have regard to the fact that it is not a very popular thing now in international affairs to maintain troops on other people's soil," he went on. "It has become

out of fashion and I think it is a good thing. I have therefore either to follow what this House has agreed and make the United Nations organisation work, or go one worse and rely solely on our own manpower and ability—there is no halfway house."

But, he reaffirmed, if nothing could be substituted to protect the Canal, the Treaty must stand. "I will be no party to a vacuum. If the Egyptian Government try to force a situation in which there is a vacuum—meaning that we have gone and that there is nothing there for security instead, regional defence or other organisation—to that I can never agree."

Finally he declared: "Our prestige is higher throughout the Muslim world now than it has been for many years, because of this decision we have taken to trust them. I am prepared to trust rather than to shoot. I had the choice of recommending force when the disturbance was in progress or offering friendship, which I thought would re-echo throughout the Arab world. I chose friendship."

The Opposition sat glumly through the long bout of cheering which greeted these words, but they did not again press a division. They preferred to let time have a casting vote in the argument.

"Quite apart from Arab rights there is no room in Palestine for unlimited immigration of Jews. It is very small and parts of it are very barren. Politically and historically the claim of the Arabs to political predominance in Palestine cannot be contested. Cannot both races, who are in fact cousins and akin, agree to form a bi-national Arab-Jewish State?"

"The Jews have brought food, health and happiness to Palestine. Palestine is only a minute portion of the Arab possessions. The Arabs have as much land as the whole of Western Europe."

"Zionism means to the Arab the handing over of the whole of Palestine to the Jews. It was only intended that there should be a Jewish national home there. A proper

national home capable of providing adequate facilities for all Jews, should be founded in the British Empire'

'Now the time has come for the Labour Party to show the sincerity of their profession of sympathy with the Jewish claims in Palestine. Let us open the gates of Palestine and let the Jews come in. Otherwise the spirit of Hitler will exult that the victorious Allies have finished for him the task of exterminating European Jewry.'

These views on the Palestinian problem expressed during the Debate on the Address sufficiently indicate the clash of irreconcilable views involved. Even regarded as a straight issue between the historic claims of Jew and Arab in Palestine isolated from the world situation and stripped of the deep emotional and racial elements, it was enough to confound the wisdom of a Solomon. But the position at the end of the war worsened daily. There were the desperate efforts of the tragic survivors of Nazi genocide to reach their promised land, the outbreaks of terrorist violence in Palestine, worldwide repercussions agitating the Zionist movements in America, the United Kingdom and the Dominions and stirring the Arab world and 90 000 000 of their co-religionists in India, and lastly there were the strategic considerations underlying the attitude of the Great Powers towards this baffling question.

American opinion had been very active on this question and in casting about for a new approach, Ernest Bevin took a statesmanlike advantage of this by extending an invitation to the American Government to co-operate in setting up a joint Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry to examine the question of European Jewry and to make a further review of the Palestine problem in the light of that review.

While the Committee's report was still awaited a debate was held in February. It was necessarily restricted by the *sub judice* atmosphere and the desire not to create difficulties for the Committee. Mr Silverman (Lab.), the most ardent champion of the Jewish cause in the House took strong objection to Mr Bevin's reference in a Press con-

ference to the Jews ' seeking to go to the head of the queue of displaced persons. The Jews had been at the head of the queue since 1933, Mr Silverman declared. They were at the head of the queue in Warsaw, at Auschwitz, in Buchenwald in Belsen and in Dachau and in all the other spots of unutterable horror that spattered the European mainland. Mr Silverman's rare blend of fiery emotion and cold logic, fused with a deep sincerity, secures him a strong following on this question but his efforts are offset by the division between Jew and Jew and between Socialist and Socialist. Another Jew, for example could not approve the policy of the Jews in Palestine and regarded the avowed purpose of the Jewish nationalists there to create a majority and thereby a Jewish State as the main obstacle to the Jewish immigration—'the creeping conquest of immigration scared by the Arabs. Many members too, thought that this was a world problem and not for Great Britain and Palestine alone. Half the Jews in the world, five million lived in America while here they numbered only 400 000 one per cent of the population.

Perhaps the most acceptable though hardly the most forthright or hopeful, view was put forward by Oliver Stanley (C), who stressed that the greatest difficulty was that the case on both sides was good. There was no fair just and permanent solution on the 100 per cent case for either side and it was only when they could find and when both sides would accept, some middle course that any permanency could be hoped for.

At the end of April the Anglo-American Committee reported. Their chief recommendation was the immediate authorisation for admission of 100 000 Jews into Palestine. So far from easing the situation the publication of the Report was followed by a series of outrages. It had called attention to the development of illegal armed forces in Palestine. The largest of these was the Hagana estimated at 70 000 to 80 000 strong. In addition there were two terrorist organisations the Irgun Zvai Leumi trained in

street fighting and sabotage, and the Stern Group, which "specialized in assassination" It was these who were said to be responsible for outbreaks of violence such as the murder of seven British soldiers at Tel Aviv, sabotage of road and rail communications and blowing up of bridges across the Jordan and the kidnapping of six British officers

On July 1, the Prime Minister stated in the House that it was clear that the Government could no longer tolerate this direct challenge to their authority without abdicating their duty Orders had therefore been given to break up the illegal organisations by arresting people believed to be responsible for the campaign of violence These included some of the leading members of the Jewish Agency, since there was evidence of close connexion between the Agency and the Hagana

This statement caused profound disquiet and Mr Silverman, securing the adjournment of the House, denounced the Government's action as "plain naked war upon the Jewish national home" What else could it be, he argued, if the Hagana consisted of 70,000 to 80,000 people out of a total population of 600,000 Jews in Palestine? The Hagana was no secret force, it had nothing in common with the two terrorist organisations The Jewish Agency moreover had the same right in Palestine as the British Government Both were creations of the mandate They were co trustees and, if they fell out about the interpretation of the trust deed, it would not do for one trustee to put the other in gaol and then proceed to shoot the beneficiaries

His solution, and that of his supporter, Mr Crossman (Lab) was to accept at once the recommendations of the Anglo-American Committee Mr Crossman urged that the only realistic way to look at the Hagana, or the Jewish community as a whole, was to regard it as a resistance movement It was impossible to crush a resistance movement that had the passive toleration of the mass of the population—the only way to do that was to give to the people who were willing to die that for which they were

willing to die

The Prime Minister firmly chastised these rebels. It was not the case, as they seemed to think that we were in Palestine as partners with the Agency for the creation of a Jewish State. Nor, as they seemed to think, had the Report of the Committee been accepted with acclamation by everybody. The facts were that there was not only evidence of a close link up between the Agency and the Hagana but between the Hagana and the Irgun. The Government wanted the Agency to keep on with its magnificent work, but it could not be a cover for running an illegal army.

Meanwhile the terrorist activities continued to culminate in the blowing up of the Government offices in the King David Hotel in Jerusalem. The curse of Hitler is not yet removed, said Herbert Morrison. "Some of his victims fleeing from the ravaged ghettos of Europe have carried with them the germs of the very plagues from which they sought to escape—intolerance, racial pride, intimidation, terrorism and the worship of force."

Such action was bound to prejudice the cause of the Jews and some members were anxious that there should be no fresh outburst of anti-Semitism. Captain Delargy (Lab) commented that the very fact that these acts were committed by Jews made them appear to some people even more shocking than if they had been committed by other people simply because there did exist a latent and potential hostility to the Jews. Mr Gallacher (Comm) gave a historical analysis of the causes of anti-Semitism and flatly denied what no one in the debate had asserted—that the Jews were in control of the finances of the country. The directors of the Bank of England and the Big Five are Gentiles, and the owners of industry are Gentiles he shouted. Look at the Tory benches—they are the real cross-section of the robber gang of this country. Almost all of them are hard-faced Gentiles!"

The debate which took place after this outrage was to

consider the proposals put forward by what was known as the expert delegation. This delegation consisted of representatives of the British and American Governments who had examined the Committee's report and now proposed their solution. This envisaged a Jewish province, an Arab province, a District of Jerusalem and a District of Negeb. Provincial Governments were to have the power of legislation and administration in their areas, leaving defence, foreign relations, customs and excise and, initially, police and courts, in the hands of the Central Government. Both the provinces would thus enjoy a large amount of autonomy and the plan left the way open for peaceful progress towards either partition or federal unity.

It could not be said that the reception of this plan was enthusiastic. It was not even damned with faint praise. Oliver Stanley, mindful, no doubt, that he had previously suggested a middle way, and this was something of the sort, did not condemn it. The only outcome he could see was partition and he was inclined favourably towards that ultimate solution. Mr Crossman viewed with suspicion the retention of the police in the hands of the Central Government. He could imagine every Jew and Arab thinking "If there were good reasons for the British troops going out of Egypt because the Egyptians did not want them, why on earth should we have the troops if we don't want them?" They would all suspect that the federal scheme was designed to play off Jew against Arab, to ensure that the British were there for ever. So little enamoured was Mr Lever (Lab.) of the plan that he put forward the idea that if we were in difficulties as trustee we had the alternative of resigning or going to court. In this case the appropriate action was to go to the only court available, the United Nations, and submit the matter to them, in order to have the weight of world opinion behind any solution, and, in so far as Britain had a legitimate right in the interests of her safety to be in Palestine, to have that right safeguarded by the United Nations.

In a long and moving speech, Mr Silverman wondered how anyone could expect any large numbers of Jews to remain in Europe, which had been the graveyard of six million of their kin in the last few years. Yet pitifully few were being admitted to this country, they had been kept out of Palestine by the present Government and the American admission of all immigrants was merely a resumption of their normal pre-war quota. There was no knowing when a start would be made with the 100,000. Why could not the Government give a definite date for the start of immigration and why could they not let the Jews into the Negeb? They had made the Vale of Jezreel bloom and they could make the desert of Negeb flower too.

Sir Stafford Cripps disputed the charges of delay. It had taken time to secure American co-operation and without American support the people of Britain would be unable to sustain the financial burden of the scheme. Moreover, those who were demanding immediate action and at the same time advocating referring the whole matter to the United Nations organisation were advocating something which would delay action still further.

The United Nations organisation was also brought into the discussion by Mr Churchill, but with a somewhat different purpose. He thought it would have been a good lever if we had been able to show sincere readiness to lay our Mandate at the feet of UNO and thereafter evacuate Palestine. But the Government, by their "precipitate abandonment" of their Treaty rights in Egypt, had vitiated disinterestedness and could now be accused of having a national strategic motive for retaining their hold on Palestine. For all that, he still thought the Government should say that if the United States would not share the burden of the Zionist cause they would give notice that they would return our Mandate to UNO and evacuate Palestine within a specified period—at the same time informing Egypt that we stood by our Treaty rights and would, by all means, maintain our position in the Canal Zone. Thus, with

Parliamentary cunning, Mr Churchill managed to drive his point home about Egypt while ostensibly discussing Palestine. He even contrived to insert a belligerent passage about India!

The onus of closing the debate fell on the stolid figure of George Hall, the Secretary of State for the Colonies. He glanced obliquely at these trenchant solutions of Mr Churchill. Certainly no one could imagine the gentle George Hall flinging a Mandate down like a gage. But, as he pointed out, if the scheme was found acceptable it should be embodied in a trusteeship agreement for submission to the United Nations. But first agreement must be reached. As for the strategic arguments of Mr Churchill, the Colonial Secretary characterised them as "mischievous," which was powerful language at any time from the Colonial Office. Our greatest safeguard, in the Middle East, he said, was the friendship of its Governments and its peoples and they did not intend to lose sight of that in Palestine any more than in Egypt.

Bearing in mind past troubles, present discontents and the probability of future anxieties in the Middle East, it is hard to avoid the reflection that, of all the Great Powers, the United Kingdom is singularly unfortunate in being so closely associated with a quarter of the world where so many great religious and nationalist movements intersect.

## THE BATTLE OF BREAD

*Enough food to live on is the basis of the whole social and economic fabric of the world and it is this foundation that is cracking before our eyes —Herbert Morrison*

WHILE international statesmen were travelling from one capital to another in search of the will o' wisp of co-operation the world food crisis continued unabated. In May British bread grew darker and the standard loaf smaller. Grants were paid for ploughing up grassland and directions were given to secure a minimum target of two and a half million additional acres for the 1947 wheat harvest. In America the extraction rate of flour was raised to 80 per cent and the use of grain and grain products as feeding stuffs was restricted. Mr Attlee offered a challenge to the supplying countries that Britain was prepared to ration bread if they were prepared to do the same. But in spite of these and other efforts by Canada, an atmosphere of mis-understanding began to spread from both sides of the Atlantic. There was a feeling in America that we were maintaining our stocks at an unduly high level and in this country it was thought that more action and less talk about conditions in India and our zone in Germany would be more appropriate.

This time it was Herbert Morrison who crossed the Atlantic for talks with the American and Canadian Governments. He came back with a two-edged sword. On one side, America associated herself with the task of supplying India and accepted that there should be the same standard of rationing in the American and British zones in Germany. On the other, Mr Morrison "reluctantly agreed" to reduce our import claim for the period up to September by 200,000 tons.

Before this latest development was debated at the end of

May a minor sensation was caused by the resignation of the Food Minister, the first senior Minister to leave the front bench. Mr Churchill sought in vain for an explanation of this sudden disappearance but Mr Morrison insisted that it was not the result of any difference of opinion on policy and there was therefore no necessity for a personal statement. This is still a free country he added. Ministers had to take a good deal of notice of Mr Churchill while he was Prime Minister but that obligation does not continue in the present circumstances."

Such sly and not so sly interchanges set the pace for the debate on Mr Morrison's mission. Mr Churchill's leading question was what exactly had been gained by giving these 200 000 tons with all the serious consequences that were likely to follow? To which Mr Morrison replied that we never had 200 000 tons. We could not give what we had not got. He had merely agreed after heavy bargaining to reduce his stated requirements. In addition as a result of the negotiations the British zone in Germany had been rescued from immediate starvation and India could look forward to security of supplies for the next four months.

Also the necessary spirit and framework for a real world wide concerted attack on famine had now been created in the International Emergency Food Council.

The very blackness of the situation is calling forth impressive and inspiring forces which may make this a turning point in human history.

This new Food Council received a blessing from Sir John Boyd Orr who warned the House that the shortage of food would last for three or four years. At the same time the Food and Agriculture Organisation had elaborated in detail what should be done by all countries to make the 1947 harvest the greatest in history.

There were some doubts on the Opposition side whether the world wide attack upon famine was really world wide. Had they got Russia in? they asked. Major Guy Lloyd alleged that countries in Eastern Europe had been deprived

of much of their foodstuffs and potential foodstuffs at the time of their so-called liberation by Russia and it was to those countries we now had to send food. Even when it got there, he added, it was being distributed with political prejudice by Communist commissars in countries which were not Communist countries at all.

As before, the Government ignored these allegations, and the new Food Minister, John Strachey, fenced lightly and wilfully with the Opposition. They talked of the 200,000 tons as if it was safely in our bins, he said. On the other hand they pretended that the one million tons for India and the 675,000 tons for Germany were airy illusions. The fact was that none of these quantities were in the bins, they were all on the same footing. The Opposition were trying to have it both ways.

John Strachey spoke with great assurance, the greater in view of the unpleasant task he had to undertake of warning the House that his Ministry were proceeding at once with the preparation of a scheme of bread rationing.

"We are sailing during the next three months into a storm area," he explained. "We don't know whether the storm will hit this country in full force, but we are determined to go into that storm area with the capacity and ability to shorten sail at the shortest notice if that proves necessary. This country cannot face the prospect of world starvation, of starvation in Europe, or, let us face it, starvation in Westphalia. There would be economic stagnation—no timber for this country, no coal, no trade, no revival, and in its place there would be pestilence and chaos."

"Famine, like peace, will be found to be indivisible. We are all members of one another. We would do well to remember Donne's words:

"Any man's death diminishes me because I am involved in mankind, and, therefore, never seek to know for whom the bell tolls. It tolls for thee."

In spite of this clear warning, when Mr. Strachey announced that bread rationing would actually be put into

operation on July 21 there was consternation in the Opposition ranks Mr Churchill rose in sombre wrath and denounced the Government for giving no figures to justify this extraordinary measure which had been the subject of one of the gravest announcements I have ever heard in the House in time of peace

His efforts to secure an immediate debate were however fruitless and the Battle of Bread which started in Fleet Street and spread through the bakers and the retailers to the housewives was not actually joined in Westminster till a week later

Then at long last the Food Minister disclosed the figures of wheat stocks. These were in constant motion along what he called the pipeline from the whole grain in the ship to the flour issuing from the mill and on August 31 there would be 800 000 tons in the pipeline—enough to secure the country's bread supply if a system of bread rationing was introduced. Rationing was an insurance against a series of risks. We should put ourselves in an impregnable position and be able to say that we had done our utmost and could not go further in that direction.

To those who said that it was unnecessary his answer was that Europe needed to import 15 500 000 tons of wheat in order to live as compared with 3 500 000 before the war and the Far East 11 000 000 tons as against 2 500 000 pre war. How could we the greatest importer of wheat in the world expect to avoid the consequences of such a situation?

During this debate and another which followed it on the Bread Rationing Order itself Government supporters were in a sensitive mood. What the Food Minister called an irresponsible Press agitation against bread rationing and the protests of the bakers combined with innumerable petitions duly read out after Questions were very trying to the nerves of an over worked House nearing the end of the Session and both debates were far more stormy than the points—or Bread Units—at issue warranted.

According to the critics it was the ill thought out and

over-complicated scheme of a cocksure and inexperienced Minister" It would add to the 12 to 15 hours a week that the ordinary housewife spent in queues It would penalize the poor and give privilege to the rich by the convertibility of BUs and points A Cornish member complained that he was getting tired of "Government by gesture," which he summed up "Give up Egypt to impress Russia, give up bread to impress America If the Government will give up Whitehall, they will impress Cornwall"

Mr Churchill built up a formidable case to show that even if there was a need for bread rationing, there was certainly no need for it as early as July 21 Why not wait till August 31? In those five weeks the saving would be less than three days' supply and by August 31 the position would have revealed itself for good or ill Contrast the smallness of the saving, he said, with the immense amount of hardship It was like using a steam hammer to crack a nut—when there was nothing in the nut Again, according to the latest forecasts, there would be bumper harvests for 1946 in the great producing countries "It is indeed a strange chain of circumstances which the Minister has to explain," he said "Bumper harvests, peaceful and open seas, Socialist planning, and yet, with all these blessings—bread rationing on July 21"

An Opposition speech by Mr Churchill is a massive rock, overshadowing and often blocking the path of those who would reply The best of its type cannot be overlooked, it requires an equal mass to shift it and only the most agile and experienced political mountaineer can hope to surmount it Though a newcomer to the ranks of senior Ministers, John Strachey, to the oft expressed delight of his supporters, showed himself a nimble scrambler

He told the House that he had chosen August 31 as a date for disclosing the stocks because it was then that it was expected the stocks would be at a dangerously low level Mr Churchill had spoken as if they were to cross a very dangerous ravine on a very narrow bridge and had

said in effect: "Oh, you needn't take any special care about crossing this bridge. Why, when you get to the other side, the road is easy and plain and wide."

Why wait until the danger point and then put on rationing? asked Mr. Strachey. "I am sure that if we did, Mr. Churchill would speak in the most scathing terms of the improvidence, recklessness and irresponsibility—I have not his wealth of language—of any Government who let the situation get right down to the danger point before they took any steps to safeguard the position."

These polite polemics eased the rationing Order through the Lobbies and the country; for the first time in its history, committed itself to the stern trial of bread rationing in peace-time.

## CHAPTER TWENTY THREE

### AT THE END OF THE DAY

*It will be the aim of my Ministers to see that the national resources in labour and material are employed with the fullest efficiency in the interests of all—King's Speech*

BREAD rationing, Palestine, Egypt and the many late sittings necessary in order to complete the timetable of legislation made the last few weeks before the Summer Recess almost excessively burdensome and the prospects of the Recess more than usually attractive. When the House rose for the summer, relief at the breathing spell afforded was heightened by a deep satisfaction over the work done. Seldom has such a mass of legislation been dealt with in a single Session. From the Government point of view there was the additional satisfaction that the purely Socialist legislation had gone through with its Socialist element unimpaired. But the Opposition, too, could congratulate themselves on the part they had played in helping to build the great structure of social insurance in itself a credible achievement even if it had been the only achievement in the Session. They could also enjoy a qualified triumph in a nationalisation issue by claiming that the powerful case they put up against the nationalisation of the iron and steel industry at least gave the Government pause and may have an even more lasting effect.

A perusal of the King's Speech will show that the Government with a single exception have carried out the whole of their programme and much more in addition. The exception is the very difficult and tangled problem of compensation and betterment. This omission will no doubt be rectified and meanwhile they have extended and accelerated the process of acquiring land and have raised the 1939 ceiling price of compensation by an increase of 60 per cent. No complaints of any weight were heard at the method of

compensation in the case of any of the nationalisation measures

Apart from the extension of nationalisation, Government control of finance and investment has been secured by the Bank of England and Borrowing Acts. In addition to this control over the life blood of industry, their grasp on the industrial life of the country has been strengthened in other ways, varying from more direct forms of control such as the establishment of the Cotton Control Board in place of the Liverpool Cotton Market to the indirect such as systems of bulk purchase, the use of the Distribution of Industry Act and the establishment of working parties in the major industries.

The fruits of Government planning do not ripen simultaneously and in some cases months and even years must pass before the harvest can be reaped but where it is possible to judge by result, it has been for the most part, heartening. The turnover to peacetime production has enmeshed smoothly with demobilisation and labour troubles have been minor in character. Production has got under way in good style and nowhere is this more encouraging than in the figures for exports which have risen far more steeply than many experts would have thought possible. Inflation has been kept in check although the cost of living figure rose two points in the latter part of the year. Increases in coal prices and railway fares must also be taken into that account.

The darker side of the picture is seen when food, coal and housing are considered. No direct blame can attach to the Government for the repercussions of a world food shortage on our domestic food and agricultural position but there can be no denying that the longterm agricultural policy has been knocked endways by the distressing make shifts entailed. Nor is there much doubt that bread rationing was an adverse factor in the July by-elections in which there was a heavy fall in the Labour vote in two Labour strongholds. Shortage of manpower, which drags heavily

on agriculture, is even more marked in coal-mining, and despite appeals, despite the Miners' Charter with its prospect of a five-day week and other inducements, and despite the passage of the Coal Nationalisation Bill, output had not improved and at a Parliamentary inquest Mr. Shinwell confessed that he was facing an estimated deficit of 5,000,000 tons in the winter. Housing was more hopeful, though naturally no one but a conjurer could satisfy the demand. The last figures given in the House showed that just over 13,000 permanent houses had been completed, nearly 2,000 war-damaged houses had been rebuilt, and over 35,000 temporary houses had been occupied. Housing is now just getting into its stride and more rapid progress may be anticipated. Mr. Bevan came very near to announcing a target when he said he was striving to complete 200,000 houses by the end of the year, but he made haste to add that it would be "an almost miraculous performance" if he succeeded.

Looking abroad, the foreign policy of the Government has been faithfully pursued, with the accord of the Opposition, through the doldrums of frustration. Ernest Bevin's manful labours have brought him fame, if not good fortune. Only once have the Opposition crossed swords with him and it still remains to be seen whether Opposition fears over the policy adopted towards Egypt are justified. It is at once chastening, and reassuring, that the lofty aspirations in the international field with which the Party and, to some extent, the Government set out, have been pulled a little closer to earth by the iron logic of events.

The impact of a Socialist Government in Britain on the British Commonwealth and Empire has made very little difference to the trend of Imperial events. The Colonial Office has quietly gone to work granting new constitutions to several Colonies, but it has mainly been engrossed in the demobilisation and resettlement of Colonial Forces. Relations with the Dominions have grown closer since the war under the pressure of the world outside. But with four

hundred million of the King's subjects relations have grown worse India wants self government and the Government are prepared to grant it This deceptively simple statement must be read in conjunction with the fact that those who are stretching out their hands for this precious gift of freedom are likely to turn and rend each other once it is bestowed In March a Cabinet Mission went out to try to secure some measure of agreement between the Indian leaders and so set in train negotiations for forming an Indian constitution to which all major parties in India would adhere After three gruelling and unsuccessful months the Mission produced their own proposals for a Union of India and provisions for electing a constitution making body These proposals coupled with freedom of choice to India as to whether she stayed in or out of the British Commonwealth are now those before the Indian people Preliminary rumblings from the Opposition indicate that objection is taken to this substitution of contracting in for contracting out as compared with the original Cripps offer authorised by the Coalition Government

The magnitude of these problems tends to overshadow the personalities of those engaged in grappling with them but at least half the success of Parliament and the whole of the success of our democratic way of life depends on the character of the men and women who represent the people at Westminster This Parliament is peculiarly rich in personalities First there is Mr Attlee who has filled out the role of Prime Minister in a manner which has commanded respect from both sides of the House His authority whether over his colleagues on the front bench or over the rank and file is beyond challenge His shrewdness and vision have been well justified in his choice of Ministers When the Government was first announced there were some who thought he had been unduly cautious in selecting only the experienced old hands for the senior posts from the wealth of talent open to him But there was quite a

sprinkling of young blood among the junior Ministers and to these he has steadily added more as their Parliamentary abilities came to light on the back-benches. What at first seemed lack of imagination has now proved to be the reverse and to evince imagination of a far sighted character. All the new appointments have given early recognition to proved merit and each one has made room for newcomers to try their teeth in office.

Opinions differ on the merits of the various Ministers, but it is generally conceded that, apart from those who had held senior office in the Coalition Government all of whom have been successful, James Griffiths and Chuter Ede have achieved a well merited popularity. Spectacular advances in appointment as well as in Parliamentary esteem have been won by two younger members of the Government, Hector McNeil and John Strachey. Youth has also made its mark, rather unusually among the Law Officers with verve by the handsome Attorney General and with impeccable lucidity by the conscientious Solicitor General.

Moving over to the benches opposite it is hard to penetrate beyond the pervading authority of Winston Churchill. Whenever he is in the House there is the indefinable air of a presence and the mood of that presence is ever the dominant factor. No one can equal his mastery of language or fail to admire even if it is hostile, the rich lavishness of his criticism. When he speaks be the matter vital or trivial, it is an occasion. Here is a statesman in the grand manner.

But Mr Churchill is not in his capacity as Leader of the Opposition obliged to be in constant attendance in the House, and his team have plenty of opportunity to show their mettle. Mr Eden after many years at the Foreign Office, now tries his hand in domestic matters as well, and is successful in adducing clear-cut argument. But on the whole his light still shines clearest in the foreign field. Harold Macmillan, Rob Hudson and Oliver Stanley have been the most adroit fighters yet there has been one

element lacking in all these front bench speakers. Their arguments are telling, but they are delivered with a charm of manner which tends to soften the blow. There is room for downright malice and even rancour in an effective Opposition. Where the rapier fails, the bludgeon might succeed. Some of the Opposition backbenchers have shown the way. There is a wholesome passion behind the attacks of Peter Thorneycroft and a fine neglect of popular prejudices in the sallies of David Eccles.

In weighing up the merits of the two sides of the House it would be fair to say that neither side grew accustomed to the reversal of their roles until well into the Session. The Government side showed this by an undue sensitiveness to criticism, wholly unwarranted in view of their preponderance in numbers, while the Opposition were long in groping for firm ground underfoot. For a large proportion of the time they were of course handicapped by their commitments under the Coalition White Papers to much of the legislation carried through by the present Government. Now that the Government has moved forward out of that region, the Opposition may be expected to grow correspondingly more pugnacious. Government supporters too will have to rely more and more on arguments addressed to the existing attitude of the Opposition and less and less to their record in a receding past, and this will be likely to sharpen the contests on future issues.

The testing days of the Government are to come. The daily queues at the St Stephen's entrance of the Houses of Parliament are evidence of the continuing interest of the people in this their Socialist experiment. There is a political nip in the air, invigorating the nation. Not only the Government but also the Opposition have a chance to show the world that the British genius for parliamentary democracy has not lost its knack of combining the optimum of individual liberty with the maximum of communal good,

## CHAPTER TWENTY FOUR

### THE DEBATE RANGES

#### ON REALISM

Ordinary men and women do not start wars. They only fight and die in them. If it is not the people who is it? I humbly suggest it is the Foreign Offices of the world. They operate according to a tradition, a tradition for which the current modern term is 'realism'. Whenever I hear a mention of realism, I have a premonition of impending mischief and violence. It was realistic to condone the Japanese action in Manchuria. It was realistic to declare for non intervention in Spain. It was realistic to encourage and strengthen Herr Hitler because of the realistic calculation that possibly his weapons might be turned East against the Bolsheviks. To all those of us who survive when we survey the long record of disaster that the calculations of realism have put upon our shoulders, it is not altogether understandable that there should be a certain degree of mistrust in the judgment of the Foreign Office. I am convinced that the contribution of the ordinary man, especially in the realm of politics, is fundamentally a moral contribution. He thinks in moral terms because he has the advantage of being uninstructed and he cannot see wood for trees. I cannot but think that considerable advantage might accrue by the introduction of a few moral simpletons into the Foreign Office. —*Benn Levy*

#### ON NUTRITION

All investigations show that in 1936 two people out of every three in the world were hungry. It is true today that some of the terrors of these new methods of destroying ourselves pale into insignificance when considered in the light of what we have always suffered stealthily and quietly, and as a result of stale custom of which we have no terror at all. The wings of hunger have always been spread over

the world and under their shade millions every year have died and hundreds of millions have survived, to grow up crippled, deformed and diseased. Even before the ravages of this war, we required a very considerable increase in the world food supplies if we were to have any safe or secure foundation for peace. We needed an increase even of cereals, the commonest and cheapest of our foods of 50 per cent. In milk and milk products we needed an increase of one and a half times, fruit and vegetables three times, meat, fish and poultry one and a quarter times. I cannot share the optimism of those who feel that if all goes well we shall soon bring about a happy millennium when all men will cease to be hungry and no man would suffer for lack of food. However much we co-ordinate our efforts, it is going to take 50 or 60 years before we can be really successful.—*Dr Barnet Stross*

#### ON CLERGYMEN IN SCHOOLS

We are simply asking that when a gentleman happens to be a qualified teacher, he should not be prevented from becoming one simply through the accident that he may have committed the indiscretion of taking Holy Orders. We are told that certain parents have an objection to their children being taught by clergymen because they imagine that clergymen are sometimes biased. But no one surely is going to ask us to believe that this is a vice confined to clergymen. Members of the Primrose League supporters of the Douglas Credit scheme and all sorts of people have bees in their bonnets without having dog collars round their necks.—*Christopher Hollis*

#### ON FILMS AND FOOD

The women of this country are the real filmgoers. They go because with conditions of life as they are at present it is a sane form of entertainment for them and they go because of the habit they formed in the old days of buying what was called three pennyworth of dark. From the

psychological point of view women, when they go to the cinema always put themselves in the place of either the heroine, or, if she is sufficiently seductive and successful, of the villainess — *Walter Fletcher*

The British Empire was built up, in the main, by fat men, and the founder of that Empire, Henry VIII, was the fattest of the lot. If we are to get our people to work hard enough to re-build the strength and greatness of this country, we must give them more to eat, whatever the physiologists may say. I would like to confess that I have a great admiration for the acting of Humphrey Bogart, and for the same reason as applies to every film fan that I can see in him on the screen the prototype of the man I would have liked to be. Nevertheless if I am compelled to choose between Bogart and bacon I am bound to choose bacon at the present time — *Robert Boothby*

#### ON WRITING TO THE GOVERNMENT

Take the War Office. In 16 cases there was a total of 98 weeks taken in answering letters. That is an average of six weeks per answer. In these cases the longest time was eleven weeks and the shortest two weeks. In 19 cases dealing with the Air Ministry, 151 weeks was the total an average of eight weeks. The longest period was 21 weeks and the shortest three weeks. I found the Board of Trade takes approximately five weeks, the Ministry of Education three and a half weeks, the Ministry of Health four weeks, the Ministry of Works five weeks and the Postmaster General a matter of a week or ten days — *E. Carson*

#### ON FOREIGN SERVICE

The Foreign Service is becoming a kind of exclusive public school which is able to mould new entrants who come into it into the traditional pattern. There is a danger that the political chiefs of the Foreign Service may themselves in time be moulded in the same way. The result is that the Foreign Secretary is not able in many cases to

carry out an effective Socialist policy first, because the information on which he bases his decisions is collected sifted and interpreted by people whose social and political outlook is such that they cannot except rarely be in sympathy with that of a Socialist Government and second because his decisions are put into effect by the same sort of people The people of countries abroad looking into the mirror which our embassies present to them see reflected not the face of contemporary Britain but that of nineteenth century defeated Britain —*W Warby*

#### ON MOTOR CARS

When motor cars first appeared on the roads a red flag had to be carried in front of the car in order to retard its progress That is how the industry has grown up From the outset to the present day the motor car has been regarded as a luxury as if it was a yacht or something like that not only by the Government but by the people Instead of being used for the benefit of the people it has become an instrument of class distinction surrounded with snobbish barriers from the Rolls Royce downwards —*Christopher Shawcross*

#### ON LIFE IN THE NAVY

I would like to describe the sort of conditions that obtained on the seamen's mess deck We were so crowded there that not all of us could sit down to dinner at the same time There were not enough plates knives and forks and we had to wait until we could grab places and knives and forks and then grab some food which was by this time half-cold We were so cramped in that mess deck that our hammocks were wedged together and any time I sneezed I used to crack the ribs of my neighbours on either side —*J P Mallalieu*

#### ON PUBLIC SERVICE

Forty six per cent of our high officials come from 12

schools That is too narrow an oligarchy Despite the fact that less than one third of the brains of the country are in those schools they enjoy every educational privilege The other two-thirds—I refer only to the intellectually brilliant—learn languages too late are taught in classes twice as big, by a staff less well paid have fewer opportunities for laboratory work, for reading, for art for athletics and for every other form of culture and are being emotionally and spiritually deprived —*E M King*

#### ON MARRIAGE

For marriage to be successful, I believe it should be made more difficult of approach than it is at present It is as easy to obtain a marriage licence as it is to buy a dog licence and most young folk have little or no guidance as to the obligations and implications of matrimony The light hearted and reckless way in which marriages are arranged is to me a cleat proof of the need of some betterment scheme of training for marriage In the words of Thomas Cranmer

Marriage ought not by anyone to be enterprised nor taken in hand inadvisedly lightly or wantonly' lies the key to the problem It is one of the most difficult vocations and the homemaking which should follow is one of the most worthwhile jobs in the world —*T C Skeffington Lodge*

## WIT AND WISDOM 'AT WESTMINSTER

Death by disease and slumdom is death just as much as if it was caused by a bomb.—*Clem Davies*.

All service, from Divine service to domestic service, is disciplined service.—*W. J. Brown*.

The Labour Party are the political Pharisees of this generation. They thank God daily that they are not as other men.—*Capt. Gammans*.

I don't want to kick people when they are down—though that is often the best time to kick them—but the Tory bubble is pricked.—*D. N. Pritt*.

No longer must Britain be regarded as the pawnshop of European crowns.—*Lt. Peart*.

The conscript is asked to endorse war in advance.—*James Hudson*.

We are told we must be very careful of what we say to the United States because they like competitive Capitalism. It must have been very wrong of us to win the election in those circumstances and some of the things said in favour of Socialism in our election addresses ought to have been taken up by the American ambassador.—*D. N. Pritt*.

The atom bomb makes complete nonsense of life. What is the use of nationalising the Bank of England this year, if it is to be vaporized next year?—*Robert Boothby*.

There was another point the Minister made that alarmed me—and when I get alarmed Britain is in danger!—*W. J. Brown*.

He has been the great *mañana* Minister of this Government. It has always, in his view, been jam to-morrow; but the result has always been to leave us in a jam to-day.—*Derek Walker-Smith*.

It is no use moving a vote of censure against the weather.—*Tom Williams*.

Nobody can imagine it is capitalists who have too much

power to-day when the poor cringing creatures can hardly blow their noses without leave from a Government department —*Christopher Hollis*

Famine is the greatest of all politicians. We cannot build peace on an empty stomach —*Sir John Boyd Orr*

The constitution is 'flexible indeed but it should not be so flexible that we should simply fold it up and put it away —*Lord Samuel*

A mandate is no substitute for argument —*Quintin Hogg*

There was a time when if you wanted to build an Empire you sent the missionary and the whisky bottle. Now you send Bing Crosby and a tin of Spam —*Lt Peart*

There is a worse thing than Capitalism and a worse thing than Communism and that is leaving the one and not arriving at the other —*H J Brown*

It is not popular with the Labour Party to talk about American finance. It is like waving a bull at a red flag —*Beverley Baxter*

The one predictable thing about a Government committee is that it will sit again —*Walter Fletcher*

Of course we all agree that our grandfathers knew nothing about economics we have only to look at the way they used to run things at a profit —*Oliver Stanley*

The Government's foreign policy seems to be open disagreements openly arrived at —*Nigel B rch*

I have never believed that you can get out of debt by getting into more debt —*Robert Boothby*

The ignorance of his hearers is the chief weapon of the demagogue —*Sir Waldron Smithers*

Unmerited misfortune is no spur to effort. —*Clement Attlee*

I have always understood that an officer in the Army has an abdomen and a private a stomach —*Tom Smith*

Fmotion is very good petrol but it is a shockingly bad driver —*S N Evans*

A lot of mischief can be done under the term keeping order —*Ernest Bevin*

A pre requisite for a better world is better and more unselfish men and women and you cannot make them by Acts of Parliament —*Sir Waldron Smithers*

A mandate is permissive and not compulsory. You are not compelled to commit a folly —*Harold Macmillan*

Championships pass from us but there is one we still hold. We hold the world's record for making the best of a bad job —*Sir Peter Bennett*

Sane and healthy nationalism has inspired many of the finest achievements of mankind, its perversion spells only degradation and depravity —*Herbert Morrison*

Because a solution is not an ideal solution that does not mean that it may not be the only solution —*Oliver Stanley*

Nothing increases the pace of the movement of public opinion more than a great war —*Clement Attlee*

To me life is so serious that it is only to be endured if I take it humorously —*W. J. Brown*

Religious denominational matters can raise very great heat and not much light —*Aneurin Bevan*

Alas for human nature—especially other people's human nature! —*Harold Macmillan*

One of the charms of the British Constitution is that there are a lot of things about it which one cannot explain —*Herbert Morrison*

There are few virtues the Poles do not possess—and few mistakes they have ever avoided —*Winston Churchill*

Some of our valleys are so narrow that the rivers have to run on their sides —*Aneurin Bevan*

## APPENDIX I

### EXTRACTS FROM THE KING'S SPEECH (August 15, 1945)

My Government will take up with energy the tasks of reconverting industry from the purposes of war to those of peace of expanding our export trade and of securing by suitable control or by an extension of public ownership that our industries and services shall make their maximum contribution to the national well being

In order to promote employment and national development machinery will be set up to provide for the effective planning of investment and a measure will be laid before you to bring the Bank of England under public ownership. A Bill will also be laid before you to nationalise the coal mining industry as part of a concerted plan for the co ordination of the fuel and power industries

Legislation will be submitted to you to ensure that during the period of transition from war to peace there are available such powers as are necessary to secure the right use of our commercial and industrial resources and the distribution at fair prices of essential supplies and services

An urgent and vital task of my Ministers will be to increase by all practicable means the number of homes available both in town and country. Accordingly they will organise the resources of the building and manufacturing industries in the most effective way to meet the housing and other essential building requirements of the nation. They will also lay before you proposals to deal with the problems of compensation and betterment in relation to town and country planning to improve the procedure for the acquisition of land for public purposes and otherwise to promote the best use of the land in the national interest

You will be asked to approve measures to provide a comprehensive scheme of insurance against industrial injuries to extend and improve the existing scheme of social insurance and to establish a national health service. Legislation will be introduced to repeal the Trade Disputes

### and Trade Unions Act

My Ministers will develop to the fullest possible extent the home production of good food. To this end they will continue with suitable adaptations those war time policies under which food production has been organised and the efficiency of agriculture improved and will take all necessary steps to promote a healthy fishing industry. My Ministers will do all in their power to provide and distribute food to my peoples at prices which they can afford to pay and they will keep in being and extend the new food services for the workers and for mothers and children which have been established during the war.

A measure will be laid before you for the reorganisation of air transport. It will be the aim of my Ministers to bring into practical effect at the earliest possible date the educational reforms which have already been approved.

In accordance with the promises already made to my Indian peoples my Government will do their utmost to promote in conjunction with the leaders of Indian opinion the early realisation of full self government in India. They will also press on with the development of my Colonial Empire and the welfare of its peoples.

## APPENDIX II

### BY-ELECTIONS

October, 1945

|                   |   |                    |     |           |
|-------------------|---|--------------------|-----|-----------|
| Smethwick         | P | Gordon Walker      | Lab | No change |
| Ashton under Lyne | H | Rhodes             | Lab | No change |
| Edinburgh         | E | G R Thomson        | Lab | No change |
| Monmouth          |   | Peter Thorneycroft | C   | No change |

November, 1945

|             |   |                  |   |           |
|-------------|---|------------------|---|-----------|
| Bromley     |   | Harold Macmillan | C | No change |
| Bournemouth |   | Brendan Bracken  | C | No change |
| Kensington  | S | Richard Law      | C | No change |

December, 1945

|                |   |                |     |           |
|----------------|---|----------------|-----|-----------|
| City of London |   | Ralph Assheton | C   | No change |
| Tottenham      | N | W J Irving     | Lab | No change |

January 1946

|         |     |            |     |           |
|---------|-----|------------|-----|-----------|
| Preston | E A | Shackleton | Lab | No change |
|---------|-----|------------|-----|-----------|

February, 1946

|                       |   |                   |     |           |
|-----------------------|---|-------------------|-----|-----------|
| S Ayrshire            | E | Hughes            | Lab | No change |
| Glasgow, Cathcart     | J | Henderson         | C   | No change |
| Heywood and Radcliffe |   | Anthony Greenwood | Lab | No change |

March 1946

|                       |  |             |   |                 |
|-----------------------|--|-------------|---|-----------------|
| Combined Universities |  | H G Strauss | C | C gain from Ind |
|-----------------------|--|-------------|---|-----------------|

June 1946

|             |            |     |                     |
|-------------|------------|-----|---------------------|
| Ogmore      | John Evans | Lab | No change           |
| County Down | Lt Mullan  | U U | U U gain from Ind U |

July, 1946

|              |             |     |           |
|--------------|-------------|-----|-----------|
| Bexley Major | E A Bramall | Lab | No change |
| Pontypool    | D G West    | Lab | No change |
| Battersea    | N D Jay     | Lab | No change |

August 1946

|           |              |     |           |
|-----------|--------------|-----|-----------|
| Bridgeton | J Carmichael | ILP | No change |
|-----------|--------------|-----|-----------|

### APPENDIX III

#### BILL

*(In order of presentation)*

Local Elections (Service Abroad)

Supplies and Services (Transitional Powers)

Indian Divorce

National Insurance (Industrial Injuries) See page 86

Inshore Fishing Industry See below<sup>1</sup>

Agriculture (Artificial Insemination) See below<sup>2</sup>

British Settlements

Water (Scotland)

Bank of England See page 55

Dock Workers (Regulation of Employment) See below

Statutory Orders (Special Procedure)

Coatbridge and Springburn Elections (Validation)

Indian Franchise

Police See below<sup>3</sup>

Consolidated Fund (No 1)

Statutory Instruments

Police (Overseas Service)

Trunk Roads See below<sup>4</sup>

Building Restrictions (Wartime Contraventions)

Civil Defence (Suspension of Powers)

National Services (Release of Conscientious Objectors)

Assurance Companies

Expiring Laws Continuance

Finance Bill (No 1) See page 133

Furnished Houses (Rent Control) See page 44

Chartered and Other Bodies (Resumption of Elections)

Emergency Laws (Transitional Provisions) See page 1

Isle of Man (Customs)

<sup>1</sup> To make grants and loans for reconditioning or replacing vi  
of inshore fishermen

<sup>2</sup> To set up Government centres for the artificial insemination  
cattle.

<sup>3</sup> To secure regularity of employment and security for dockwa

<sup>4</sup> To merge non-county borough police forces with co  
borough police, to promote amalgamation schemes for the  
under the State

## BILLS

War Damage (Valuation Appeals)

Public Health (Scotland)

Workmen's Compensation (Pneumoconiosis)

Building Materials and Housing See page 62

Electors and Jurors

Local Government (Financial Provisions)

Local Government (Financial Provisions) (Scotland)

Bretton Woods Agreement See page 82

Acquisition of Land (Authorisation Procedure) See page 65

Ministers of the Crown (Transfer of Functions)

Education

India (Proclamation of Emergency)

Coal Industry Nationalisation See page 99

National Insurance See page 90

Borrowing (Control and Guarantees) See page 58

Trade Disputes and Trade Unions See page 113

Housing (Financial and Miscellaneous Provisions) See page 68

Housing (Financial Provisions) (Scotland)

Miscellaneous Financial Provisions

Public Works Loans

Hill Farming See below\*

Agricultural Development (Ploughing up of Land) See page 154

Straits Settlements (Repeal)

Patents and Designs

Camberwell, Bristol and Nottingham Elections (Validation)

India (Central Government and Legislature)

Army and Air Force (Annual)

Consolidated Fund (No 2)

National Health Service See page 144

Civil Aviation See page 108

Post Office and Telegraph (Money)

\* To make grants for improving hill farm land

### APPENDIX III

#### BII LS

*(In order of presentation)*

Local Elections (Service Abroad)

Supplies and Services (Transitional Powers)

Indian Divorce

National Insurance (Industrial Injuries) See page 86

Inshore Fishing Industry See below

Agriculture (Artificial Insemination) See below \*

British Settlements

Water (Scotland)

Bank of England See page 55

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Statutory Orders (Special Procedure)

Coatbridge and Springburn Elections (Validation)

Indian Franchise

Police See below \*

Consolidated Fund (No 1)

Statutory Instruments

Police (Overseas Service)

Trunk Roads See below \*

Building Restrictions (Wartime Contraventions)

Civil Defence (Suspension of Powers)

National Services (Release of Conscientious Objectors)

Assurance Companies

Expiring Laws Continuance

Finance Bill (No 1) See page 133

Furnished Houses (Rent Control) See page 44

Chartered and Other Bodies (Resumption of Elections)

Emergency Laws (Transitional Provisions) See page 39

Isle of Man (Customs)

To make grants and loans for reconstruction or replacing vessels of inshore fishermen

\* To set up Government centres for the artificial insemination of cattle

\* To secure regularity of employment and security for dockworkers

\* To merge non-county borough police forces with county and borough police to promote amalgamation schemes for police areas

\* To bring a further 3,685 miles of roads into the national system under the State

## BILLS

War Damage (Valuation Appeals)

Public Health (Scotland)

Workmen's Compensation (Pneumoconiosis)

Building Materials and Housing See page 62

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Education

India (Proclamation of Emergency)

Coal Industry Nationalisation See page 99

National Insurance See page 90

Borrowing (Control and Guarantees) See page 58

Trade Disputes and Trade Unions See page 113

Housing (Financial and Miscellaneous Provisions) See page 68

Housing (Financial Provisions) (Scotland)

Miscellaneous Financial Provisions

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Hill Farming See below\*

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Patents and Designs

Camberwell Bristol and Nottingham Elections (Validation)

India (Central Government and Legislature)

Army and Air Force (Annual)

Consolidated Fund (No 2)

National Health Service See page 144

Civil Aviation See page 108

Post Office and Telegraph (Money)

\* To make grants for improving hill farm land.

United Nations See below <sup>1</sup>  
 Railways (Valuation for Rating)  
 New Towns See below <sup>1</sup>  
 Finance (No 2) See page 136  
 Cable and Wireless See below <sup>2</sup>  
 Atomic Energy See below <sup>3</sup>  
 Superannuation  
 Licensing Planning (Temporary Provisions)  
 Ministerial Salaries See below <sup>4</sup>  
 British Museum  
 Burma Legislature  
 Diplomatic Privileges (Extension)  
 Isle of Man (Customs) (No 2)  
 British North America  
 Consolidated Fund (Appropriation)  
 Roosevelt Memorial See below <sup>5</sup>  
 County Councils Association (Scotland)  
 Coinage See below <sup>6</sup>  
 Public Works Loans (No 2)  
 Unemployment Insurance (Eire Volunteers)  
 Police (Scotland)  
 Education (Scotland)  
 Supreme Court of Judicature (Circuit Officers)  
 Public Notaries (War Service of Articled Clerks)

To empower the Government to carry out certain economic sanctions when ordered by the Security Council

\* To enable the Government to create new towns to relieve urban congestion to set up development corporations for the same and to provide Government loans

\* To nationalise cable and wireless telecommunications

\* To secure Government control over the research into and development and use of atomic energy

To raise the salaries of Ministers

\*\* To provide for a memorial to President Roosevelt in Grosvenor Square.

\* To provide for coins other than silver to be legal tender up to 40s

# THE GOVERNMENT

(OCTOBER 1946)

## PRIME MINISTER—

Clement Attlee \*

## ADMIRALTY—

First Lord—*Viscount Hall*

Civil Lord—W J Edwards

Financial Secretary—John Dugdale

## AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES—

Minister—Tom Williams \*

Joint Parliamentary Secretaries—

Earl of Huntingdon

P H Collick

## AIR—

Secretary of State—*Philip Noel Baker*

Under Secretary—*G S de Freitas*

## CIVIL AVIATION—

Minister—*Lord Nathan*

Parliamentary Secretary—*G S Lindgren*

## COLONIES—

Secretary of State—*Arthur Creech Jones* \*

Under Secretary—*Ivor Thomas*

## DOMINIONS—

Secretary of State—*Viscount Addison* \*

Under Secretary—*A G Bottomley*

## DUCHY OF LANCASTER—

Chancellor—John Burns Hynd

## EDUCATION—

Minister—*Ellen Wilkinson* \*

Parliamentary Secretary—*D R Hardman*

## FOOD—

Minister—*John Strachey*

Parliamentary Secretary—*Dr Edith Summerskill*

## FOREIGN AFFAIRS—

Secretary of State—*Ernest Bevin* \*

Under Secretary—*C P Mayhew*

## FUEL AND POWER—

Minister—Emanuel Shinwell \*

Parliamentary Secretary—*Hugh Gaitskell*

## HEALTH—

Minister—Aneurin Bevan \*

Parliamentary Secretary—Charles Key

## HOME AFFAIRS—

Secretary of State—Chuter Ede \*

Under Secretary—G H Oliver

## INDIA AND BURMA—

Secretary of State—Lord Pethick Lawrence \*

Under Secretary—Arthur Henderson

## LABOUR AND NATIONAL SERVICE—

Minister—George Isaacs \*

Parliamentary Secretary—Ness Edwards

## LAW OFFICERS—

Attorney General—Sir Hartley Shawcross

Lord Advocate—George Reid Thomson

Solicitor General—Sir Frank Soskice

Solicitor General for Scotland—D P Blades

## LORD CHANCELLOR—

Lord Jowitt \*

## LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL—

Herbert Morrison \*

## LORD PRIVY SEAL—

Arthur Greenwood \*

## MINISTER OF STATE—

*Hector McNeil*

## MINISTER WITHOUT PORTFOLIO—

*A V Alexander* \*

## NATIONAL INSURANCE—

Minister—James Griffiths

Parliamentary Secretary—*Tom Steele*

## PENSIONS—

Minister—Wilfrid Paling

Parliamentary Secretary—*Arthur Blenkinsop*

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# Local Government in England and Wales

by W E Jackson

This book will interest everyone who wants to have, without elaborate technicalities a plain statement of what local government is all about. It gives a simplified but authentic explanation of what the local government system is, its place in the national scheme, and what the various types of local council do and the numerous and important public services they perform. The citizen who wishes to keep informed on public affairs, or the student who is looking for something easier than the duller text books will find this book of value. Even the member or official of a local authority will find it useful as a compendious refresher course and a companion for brief and easy reference.

The administration of justice in boroughs and counties is shortly described. An account is given of the procedure at local elections, with the qualifications and disqualifications for voting and for being elected.

There is a chapter about municipal officials and the work they do, the prospects of local government as a career, and the salaries and conditions of service. The relative positions of the elected member and the official are discussed. The author pays special tribute to the voluntary work done by the elected member. Another chapter is devoted to local government finance, the rating system, government grants, local loans and trading services, showing where the local authority gets its money and the procedure in spending it.

# John Citizen and the Law

by Ronald Rubinstein

This book about English law has been written expressly for the people. It is not a book for lawyers. It is intended to fill the gap which is bound to exist when the secondary schools have no time and perhaps no inclination to include a study of law in their already overcrowded curriculum.

No one can become a skilled lawyer except after intensive study. There is however a wide gap between ignorance and knowledge and since ignorance of the law is no excuse, Everyman ought not to be entirely uninformed.

The author however emphasises the dangers of generalisations, of which a book of this character must necessarily consist, and warns the reader not to attempt to interpret the law by his own unaided efforts.

The book covers a large field. After explaining the necessity for an ordered legal system in any civilised community the author deals briefly with the foundations upon which the English legal system has been built. He then reviews the legal relationship which may arise between fellow men from cradle to the grave—and after death there are duties which pass to our executors and administrators. Legal relationship is based upon legal rights and we are shown that legal right must always involve a corresponding legal obligation.

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